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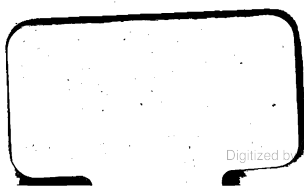
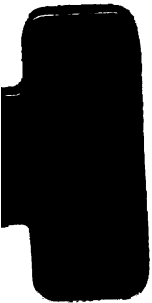
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**GOD THE CREATOR OF BOTH EVIL AND GOOD
FOR OUR BENEFIT.**



GOD THE CREATOR
OF BOTH EVIL AND GOOD
FOR OUR BENEFIT.

BY
H. PINSON.

"I form the light, and create darkness :
I make peace, and create evil :
I the Lord do all these things.'

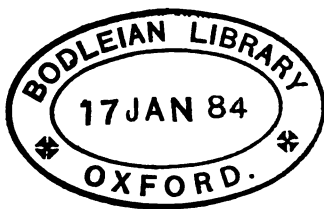
—ISAIAH xlv. 7.

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GOD THE CREATOR OF BOTH EVIL AND GOOD FOR OUR BENEFIT.

CHAPTER I.

Remarks of a Clergyman—Intolerance and its Cause—Good and Evil in all Creation—Idolatry Destroys People—Diverse Teaching—Evil Spirits.

A CLERGYMAN asks, with reference to the view expressed herein, that the Almighty is the Creator of both evil and good for our benefit: "Have you fairly thought out all the stupendous issues that such a doctrine entails?" and remarks also: "I think it would have been more to the point had you given a short outline of your belief, especially with regard to the Being of God, as well as to the inspiration and authority of the Holy Scriptures." That the issues are stupendous has been fully considered herein with the present teaching and its consequences; and in the Apostles' Creed is set forth the belief embodied in any matter of faith, herein alluded to, if the word "hell" is erased therefrom, and the original word "hades" introduced

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in its place. With respect to the matter of inspiration, there are many different degrees shown in the Scriptures: thus the inspiration of Samson was of a much inferior character to Isaiah's; the inspiration of Moses was inferior to the inspiration of our Saviour, whose inspiration was the highest. All Scripture must be brought to this test, and stand or fall by *His Words* in the four gospels and by His example and teaching.

The minds of men, trained as they are upon the foundations and buildings of priests and ministers, are ever in difficulties and doubts and fears of the most distracting character, and often of the most dreadful description, ending but too often in lunacy or religious madness; whilst the end and aim of each priest and minister is to obtain as many followers and supporters as possible, he who *is spoken well of by all men* being in the most envied position. The interpretation that each Church puts upon the Scriptures is the correct one, and each priest or minister knows the straight and the narrow way to happiness and everlasting salvation, whilst in many cases the people are taught that those without the pale of his Church can never receive or attain to it.

Thus, priests and ministers are the fathers of intolerance of the worst character; nor can anyone imagine a more fruitful source for the bitterest hatred and malice and all uncharitableness, or anything more abominable in the eyes of Him who has created all things for His pleasure, and who, for His own wise purposes, hides Himself and His ways from the children of men, so that none but our Saviour could understand or comprehend Him.

The great difference that there is in the teaching of the

Scriptures and the teaching of priests and ministers is that the foundation laid in the second chapter of Genesis is that the Almighty is the Creator of both good and evil *for our benefit*, whilst the foundation laid by all priests and ministers is that God is the Creator of good for our preservation, and the devil is the creator of evil for our destruction. Those to whom our Saviour listened when He was only twelve years old, "hearing them, and asking them questions," taught thus: "You are to be thankful for the evil, even as you are thankful for the good," thus endorsing the teaching of the Scriptures with which they were so well acquainted.

Whoever will think upon this will admit that without good and evil there can be no reasoning or intelligence, progress or improvement, and no repentance; that without evil there can be no good. Evil, in fact, is so predominant in every man that the record in Job is that man is prone to evil as the sparks fly upward; and Moses puts before the Israelites this, telling them, "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live"; and our Saviour's teaching is to the same purpose; whilst Isaiah, in writing to the priests, declares His Word to be, "*I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things*" (xlv. 7).

This is the foundation of the building, of which our Saviour is the chief Corner-stone, that has been overthrown by priests and ministers, or Scribes and Pharisees; and there are now hundreds of buildings raised by them instead upon the foundations that they contrive to lay, not one of

which corresponds with the foundation laid by the Scriptures.

The observation of all thoughtful men must endorse our Saviour's words, that "the heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." And, so far from His teaching being the now prevalent one of the fall of all men, in consequence of the fall of Adam, He shows that this is an order in the creation of all men, and all things, for the end proposed by Him who has created us for His pleasure, and who, for His own wise purposes, has made Himself incomprehensible.

That "*all flesh* shall see the salvation of God," or that such a thing should be possible with God, as prophesied by John the Baptist, is no more believed than that Publicans and harlots enter heaven before Scribes and Pharisees, or priests and ministers ; and intolerance is as rampant now as when our Saviour endeavoured to correct it by telling those that He spoke to of the widow of Sarepta and Naaman the Syrian, as having help sent to those who were looked upon by the Israelites as dogs, whilst many Israelites in the same distress, who knew themselves to be God's own children especially, received no help at all ; and in return He was cast out of the church, and narrowly escaped being thrown over a precipice for His pains.

If there is any one thing that the Scriptures teach more persistently and continuously than another, it is to respect the office of the priest or the minister, but to beware, above all things, of him and his ways. In this nothing is to supersede the necessity there is that every *man* should read and understand the Scriptures for himself.

It is perfectly consistent with the revelation of Him

“who judgeth no man” that He is love, and that He should, whilst creating evil and good for our benefit, have sent His Son into the world to suffer in excess of the various ways that all are subject to, more or less, from others, whilst He lived the best of lives, that He should not spare Himself even to assigning Him a cruel death. It is quite consistent with all that is recorded of our Saviour that He should live the life He did for us, and give up a life for us which might otherwise have been attended with all the comforts and pleasures that we are so much attached to, whilst He accepted a mean condition, and in the greatest humility opposed the priesthood and ministers, and taught the strait and the narrow way for every one; attested to by the greatest miracles, giving up His life for ours, that we might have an assurance of a better life hereafter through Him, as well as the example for all time of a better life here, not before manifested.

He will assuredly be the Lord of all hereafter, sparing those who have believed in Him, and remembered His words, and striven to follow Him, however poorly and weakly; whilst visiting deceivers and hypocrites with just condemnation, who, whilst calling Him Lord, Lord, have not heeded His words or remembered His ways, but who have rather copied from the ways of the Scribes and the Pharisees, and the pagans and the idolaters whilst representing themselves to be His servants and His followers.

It was to show forth the Almighty as the Creator of both good and evil that He assured us, “The Father judgeth no man.”

It was to show forth this that He told us that the only evil we had to fear was within us.

It was to show that God is the Creator of both evil and good, *for our benefit*, that our Saviour assured us that all sins and wickednesses that men commit should be forgiven them, except the blasphemy of priests and ministers against the Holy Ghost.

It was to show forth this that He told the multitude, if they did not hear His words, that their houses would fall when the storms and troubles of life assailed them; that temporal people might know that God corrected them in a temporal manner.

St. Augustine says that absolute evil is impossible, because if we look at it rightly it is always using up into good. "Indeed, it is not too much to say that all things, in a certain sense, existed first in the form of evil" (*Mallock*).

St. Paul even recognized that God was the Creator of evil and good; for he says: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, *not imputing their trespasses unto them.*"

The struggle there is throughout all creation, which all that is good has to maintain for an existence against all that is evil, can only be understood by contemplating it. The animal that above all others is the most valuable to man is the sheep, and there is no animal, perhaps, so utterly destitute and helpless, or so dependent on man for a continued existence; whilst the creatures that are, not only not so useful, but absolutely, in many cases, venomous and dangerous, are capable of self-defence. The plant of wheat, that is the most valuable to us, could not exist if absolutely neglected by man and left to itself for a very few years; whilst there is no weed that will not spread and increase if left to itself to grow in its wildness. In the air the fierce

and violent prey on the defenceless and inoffensive as well as upon the earth ; and the same order prevails in the sea also. Nor does this great order end here. There is in every man a continuous struggle of the evil with the good, and how much the evil predominates must be for observation to determine. So that this order is established, not only within him, but in all that is around him. Nor is the struggle by which all that is good and estimable is maintained of a slight or insignificant character, but the progress of all that is good, with all its helplessness, though slow is sure.

Nor is man himself an exception to this great rule, as it has been only by the care of an Almighty Hand that his preservation and progress have been continually secured, and his elevation from the lowest condition of humanity cultivated by absolute creations from time to time of a superior race. This is now manifested plainly, first, by evidences that can leave no doubt that peculiar races have from time to time absolutely been extinguished—apparently people who have practised the worship of images—as in some of these cases great idols of stone remain amongst the other evidences of the existence of a race of men where no men are now to be found.

These are the only records that now remain by which we can be guided to the conclusion of the existence of people before the ability to make records in writing, except that the lowest races now are in the same or even a lower condition, the power of making records in writing being absolutely deficient in savages who have no idolatrous worship, as well as with some of those who are worshippers of idols. The ability to make records in writing in its

earliest efforts may be illustrated by the first chapter of Genesis, the short, condensed matter therein contained showing the difficulty that then existed in making any records at all. And although many races of men must have existed when these records were made, they are all generalized under one record of the creation of males and females, in the same manner that the record of the creation of beasts was made.

After the time of the creation of Adam and Eve this ability to make records increased, and consequently it has a short allegorical history attached to it; and the evidence of the superiority of this creation to all others preceding it is the extended history of this family, culminating in the birth of our Saviour, without whose creation mankind could not have progressed beyond the condition they had attained to at His advent. That Moses was inspired to collect these records from the stores of the Egyptians may be gathered from the knowledge we have that he was educated by them, and that they were a very superior race. We know certainly, from the character of their monuments and the remains of the people that have been found in them, such a people would necessarily have endeavoured to collect whatever information could be obtained from every source that came within the bounds of their observation.

That to the worship of pictures and images was ascribed the gradual decline and ultimate extinction of those people who practised it may be gathered from the severe laws against it promulgated through Moses, it being the very first of those offences against morality which were cursed before all the people by the Levites appointed by him, and

which the people were called upon to join in condemning, recorded in the twenty-seventh chapter of Deuteronomy, verse 15. And as that which is of the greatest consequence is always in Scripture attended to first, the character of the other vices cursed will show the estimation in which it was held.

The singular character of this record is worthy of special attention, as it shows that the natural desire of man to have something before his eyes when he is worshipping or praying was appreciated by Moses in its serious and destructive consequences ; but it is used in the present day by priests and ministers notwithstanding, thereby to increase the devoutness of their congregations, destroying souls and endangering the continued existence of the nation. Necessarily the inability to perceive the terrible character and result of the breach of the first denunciation only shows the inability to regard those that follow it, and the clergy or leaders are not exempted consequently from committing the less serious offences any more than the multitude that follow them are.

Our Saviour's cautions against false teachers, who should be known by their fruit, have been prostituted by those in authority as priests and ministers to apply to those who have resisted *them*, until whole nations have been reduced to idolatry or atheism ; and even our Saviour in His day was called a false teacher by them ; so that the struggle between the evil and the good in the spiritual world is not less, or of a less serious character, than it is in the temporal world—indeed, evil would appear to predominate there at times even to a greater extent with similar destructive consequences as in the temporal world ; but our Saviour

says both must grow together until the harvest; afterwards there is to be a separation.

“It must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!” is our Saviour’s declaration; yet the very first Scriptural lesson is ignored, that God is the Creator of both good and evil. How many must, in consequence, have perverted texts of the building of which this was the foundation, and of which our Saviour was the chief Corner-stone! If this has been done wilfully, it may be a consolatory reflection that no man’s wickedness prevents the Almighty’s work. And if suffering in this world is the best preparation for the life to come, priests and ministers must have the credit of having caused more bodily suffering, more anguish of mind, more unhappiness in communities and families, more loss of life, and more division amongst people speaking the same language than any other class of men on the face of the whole earth, whilst obscuring, if not absolutely destroying, that consolation our Saviour was so anxious should be imparted to *every creature*.

Without this knowledge of the foundation on which the Scriptures are built all sorts of interpretations or readings are adopted of the original text; and the more learned the translators have been, the more various have been the interpretations and the more prolific have been the causes of dissent and the hatreds and the animosities that have been fomented. Words omitted, words substituted, and words transposed are to be counted by the thousand, that a close attention to this great lesson would have obviated in great measure. The great human family would have been instructed in the truth, and darkness and ignorance would

have been destroyed by the light of God's holy Word, and peace and happiness and progress would have taken the place of strife and wretchedness, and stagnation spiritually.

"It must needs be that offences come," but the belief that there is a great creator of evil for our destruction, opposed to an almighty Creator of good, is an offence against Him who is incomprehensible of the deadliest character, shattering society into fragments, destroying His teaching, and but too often the lives of His people ; intolerance of each other so extreme as to induce a belief in some that His salvation only applied to those belonging to their Church, even to marry out of it being denounced, the strife being continued through life amongst those whose natural ties often were the newest, and but for this teaching would have been the dearest.

How Christ is to be "all and in all," as St. Paul prophesies, unless His teaching is received as superior to the teaching of any other, it is difficult to see. He is the Word by which every record of Scripture must be tried. All that He ever did or said shows that He recognized mankind as born sinners, and yet superior to beasts that could not sin ; that the sinner could not be happy, and was to be pitied and loved and taught whilst under the hand of His Father ; not to be threatened and cursed and driven away, but to be drawn to Him.

To be thankful that the Almighty did not create us as beasts that cannot sin, and that He has created us human beings that can and do sin, takes away nothing from the great sacrifice that our Saviour made for us ; takes away nothing from His sufferings for us, nor diminishes in any way His divinity. We must all, through much tribulation,

attain to better things—not a soul is exempt from this law; but it would tend to make people humble and thankful, who, after being born again, are in danger of becoming worse than they were before, through spiritual pride and self-confidence and vanity, if not hypocrisy, if they remembered this.

There was a great difference between the teaching of Moses and the teaching of Christ, Moses having been meek above all men in his time, and Christ still more humble and lowly afterwards; and in the long space of time that intervened, much spiritual matter of a miraculous character was openly manifested, whilst open vision appears to have ceased. Prophets who had the testimony of the Spirit deceived one another; lying spirits were permitted to influence other prophets; the witch of Endor showed a singular power practised by many; Eli neglected to correct his sons, who were priests, for the most shameful profanity and wickedness, even when committed in the Lord's house; the priesthood were charged by the prophets with crimes of all sorts: and yet great judgments were abroad, showing forth God's power and might for the protection and preservation of a people amongst whom so much of a character that was inconsistent with that displayed after by our Saviour took place.

Now, St. John lays it down as a rule that the Spirit of God—by which he intended to imply a good spirit—might be known by the person confessing Christ, and heeding His words and following Him, and that every spirit that did not do this was an evil spirit, or what St. John calls "that spirit of anti-christ," or a spirit that, whilst acknowledging Him, acted against Christ or His example or directions;

or, as our Saviour Himself describes it, a spirit that could or would call Him Lord, Lord, and yet would not obey Him, or hear what He said.

It must be evident that a very prolific source from which such spirits might proceed would be from the laying on of the hands of others ; a means of imparting a spirit not recognized by our Saviour, and a breach apparently of His direct instructions to lay hands only upon the sick : for had He intended that a spirit should thus be conveyed by others to a man in health, He would most certainly have signified so important a matter to them. It would appear that the precedent set in so doing by St. Paul and the apostles was without His sanction, did not bring forth good fruit, had evil results, and was an abuse of the spirit which had been given to them, just as St. Peter abused the Spirit in another way and willed away the lives of Ananias and Sapphira, and so behaved himself after that St. Paul was obliged to administer serious correction to him. The preparation that the apostles had received before the Holy Ghost rested on them, if compared with the preparation of those who absolutely did not know if there was any Holy Ghost at all, upon whom St. Paul laid his hands, affords no warrant whatever for believing that what he did was right, but rather that he abused that which had been given him. And his own records and St. John's epistles show that very many at least of those on whom hands had been laid were rather filled by evil than by good spirits afterwards ; for wicked spirits, Christ says, work miracles. (Matt. vii. 22.) Whoever they are that may think that Elymas the Sorcerer was a fool are greatly mistaken in their reasoning ; and as it is evident that the gift of the Holy Ghost even may be

abused, the only safeguard that any man can possibly have is faith or belief in Christ alone.

The great safeguard against deception was the laying hands on the sick and healing them, and the most that could be advanced for laying hands on others would be—
“This ought ye to have done, but not to have left the other undone.”





CHAPTER II.

Differences of Spiritual Life—Laying on of Hands—Application of Prophecy to Priests and Ministers—Results of Evil Teaching—Limiting the Almighty—Errors of the Scribes and Pharisees continued—Our Saviour's Cautions—St. Paul's Followers—Moses' Teaching—Consequences of Spiritual Disobedience—Blindness of the Multitude.

THE gift of spiritual life and the gift of the Holy Ghost are very different things.

The preposterous assumption entertained by priests and ministers, whether they may or may not have been born again, and conceded to them by the multitude, that they have had given to them the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands, imparting to them wisdom, and understanding, and knowledge, and counsel, and might, and the fear of the Lord, is only supported by their having had hands laid upon them by others ; by a dress supposed to be appropriate to priests and ministers, always of greater length than that usually worn by the multitude ; by a reserved or sad and more or less sanctimonious manner ; and by a devout way of speaking, all or any of which can be obtained or assumed by the vilest hypocrites of the fiercest or proudest character. Neither of these identities is at all requisite to show forth the greatest gift that the Almighty has ever conferred upon anyone, but rather the contrary. They are

always better assumed by Mohammedan, or idolatrous, or other pagan priests or ministers, than they are by those who call themselves Christians; and they are quite inconsistent with the description that would apply to "him who serves" in a menial capacity those he might be associated with, washing even their feet occasionally, if necessary. But consistency with the example of our Saviour does not appear now to be much considered by anyone.

It was in this light that St. Paul endeavoured to correct the evil spirits that he saw had been produced by the laying on of hands, telling those to whom he wrote, "He that would be chiefest amongst you, make him the servant of all." He appears certainly in this to have kept our Saviour in remembrance, and to have endeavoured to *make* priests and ministers humble. But priest and minister now, whether, so called, Christian, or Mohammedan, or idolatrous, or pagan, are all imbued with the same sad countenance and spirit of determination to make people good, and to obtain as much authority as possible over them, so as to expel or cast out all those who will not obey them and be subject to their interpretations and directions.

In this way they are all *wise*, and *understanding*, and *knowing*, taking *counsel* of those likely to assist them and to give them *power*; and the confidence they have that they are in the *fear of the Lord*, and that they are keeping the strait and the narrow way, and acting in accordance with our Lord's commands, and in the humble spirit He took so much pains to impress, is of such a character that nothing can persuade them to the contrary; or, in our Saviour's words, "They will not be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

Nothing can so well illustrate the perverseness or inability in human nature to follow His example than their refusal to follow His teaching in performing menial services for others. His humility seems ever since to be ignored, and in most important ways ; the very things that He denounced are continually done, the very gift of spiritual life being more abused by those who call themselves His followers than it was by the Scribes and Pharisees, and the multitude is abandoning the priests and ministers, and their synagogues threaten to stand empty of all but those that nothing can convince that their *ways* and our Saviour's example and instructions are utterly at variance with each other.

After the descent of the Holy Spirit upon our Saviour, we have the record of the greatest humility, even to the performance of menial offices for His disciples. But after the laying on of hands, we have the record of "many evil spirits" having gone forth ; and the pride of a priest or minister has become proverbial ; indeed, the very first thing that a priest or a minister will do after he has had "hands laid upon him" is to assume authority over others : but that which our Saviour specially called the attention of His apostles to was, that He had been amongst them "as he that serves."

The presumption that any person or persons can convey or impart the Holy Ghost to another is a most frightful deception that has no consistent testimony accompanying it, and it is utterly inconsistent with our Saviour's teaching. No sinner has such power, and no man is without sin. Christ is the only One who retained the Holy Ghost, by His being without sin ; nor is there anything in all His teaching

that could justify the apostles in such an assumption, or that can warrant others since then, or in the present day, in imagining such a thing to be possible.

The Holy Ghost appears only to have rested on the apostles, and was not retained by them. The evidence of this is their divisions and St. Paul's lamentation over the condition in which he found himself to be, and which he trusted in Christ to be delivered from, but only after death.

If St. Paul and the apostles had obediently confined themselves to the laying on of their hands upon the sick, and refrained from imagining that they were able to make ministers of men, of the condition of whose heads and of whose hearts they must have been ignorant, the great evils that have afflicted the Church would have had no vitality, even if they had at any time obtained an existence; but their spiritual pride was flattered by the idea that they had power given them in this way also, and faith in Christ's superintendence was lost. The fruit has shown what tree it was—of the very worst spiritual character that can possibly be imagined. So-called Christianity for ages was the greatest curse that could afflict humanity. All power lost to heal any sick by the laying on of hands, or belief even that any power is given in the present day, is almost wanting, and an absolute barrier is raised that nothing but a new dispensation will remove.

When, in disobedience, no hands are laid on the sick, and no miracle or shadow of a miracle accompanies the supposed gift, in like manner as there was in many different ways when our Saviour and the apostles after His resurrection received it, what justification can there possibly be for such a presumption, when those who have made such

an awful claim shall have to give an account for it, more especially when an evil spirit may have been imparted to another instead of a good one, and an absolute spiritual injury inflicted on the person and on the multitude ?

There is abundant evidence on record to show that the Christian ministry in all ages might have had the same remark made upon it that St. John delivered himself of in his epistle, when he noticed that "many evil spirits had gone abroad into the world"; and our Saviour's words proclaim that a condition of things would be permitted to exist out of which He would have to condemn many to extreme punishment and correction when He came again. In accordance therewith are the records of all Church history in all times and in all ages since He was crucified. Nor are they less now, when only the laying on of hands upon healthy instead of sick men, or long prayers and regular prayer-meetings, or the putting Him to shame as a wine-bibber by very good people, or idolatrous, presumptuous practices and proceedings, or frightful denunciations upon the multitude amounting to blasphemy, is the limit—all evil fruit of corrupt trees. But no one may now be tortured, or imprisoned, or put to death by burning, or in any other way, by priests or ministers; nor may the lives of those calling themselves His servants be openly scandalous and be tolerated. Yet the fruit is but little better, although from independent causes the condition of the great multitude is ameliorated and improved. Many who think themselves converted men are so confident, and know so well the good *they* have done, and are doing, that if one or a dozen men rose from the dead, they would not believe to the contrary.

The Satan, or devil, who could transform himself into an angel of light, and who was a liar from the beginning, and the devil who went about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he might destroy, represent two very different descriptions of persons: the one a teacher of that which, although apparently good, was yet destructive of true religion and of Christianity, as total abstinence, confession, long prayers, &c. ; the other represented those who sought out the Christians in old times for the purpose of denouncing them and of putting them to death.

The slow but surely progressive work of the Lord cannot be prevented by anyone, and "the work that He that is incomprehensible doeth, He doeth it Himself." It is of all imaginable kinds, and he uses vile instruments in doing it.

So impressed were the early Christians with the knowledge that the Almighty was the Creator of both good and evil, and that in their attempts to do good they only produced evil, that they said to one another, "Let us do evil that good may come of it," whose condemnation St. Paul said was just. The belief in God as the Creator of good of all kinds, and in the devil as the creator of evil of all kinds, is that which necessarily accommodates itself to, and has always been the belief of, the most simple-minded or primitive people in every country of the world; and it now withstands the teaching of the Scriptures because the Scriptures have been adulterated with it, and because of the necessity it is presumed there is that people should be kept in fear of spiritual things by priests and ministers.

That St. Paul understood that the Incomprehensible is the Creator of both good and evil may be perceived by reading his Epistle to the Romans, wherein he only alludes

to Satan in the very last chapter, in allusion to teachers or ministers who were striving to create division amongst Christians; and none of it is inconsistent with our Saviour's declaration that "the Father judgeth no man."

Could any minister or priest, believing in the devil as the creator of evil, write so much without declaring sin to be created by the devil? Priests and ministers can never believe that God justifies the ungodly, nor can they be still, and know that He is God. They are, indeed, so completely identified with the Scribes and Pharisees that no one with ordinary discernment will fail to note the similarity. Where there are no long prayers or prayer-meetings, there are the broad phylacteries and cleanliness of the outside of the cup and platter, and the traditions of the fathers and prescribed fasts and holy days, the belief in the devil and torment for ever in fire for sinners, and self-righteousness being common to both.

St. Paul's prophecy in 2 Timothy i. 8—that our Saviour shall hereafter be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who would not obey by teaching His good news of salvation to every creature, and of the coming of the kingdom of God upon earth—can only apply to those priests and ministers and so-called converted men who have, through their determination to do good in their own way, and to make people good by threats of eternal punishment on evil doers ("going astray as soon as they were born again"), and to support and maintain their authority, and to keep people in submission and obedience to them, so taught the multitude that, when it has been instructed in spiritual things, it has been divided into innumerable sections by

the utmost hatred and dislike to one another ; and where it has been kept in ignorance and the Scriptures perverted and paganism grafted upon it, with wooden crosses and images and fine raiment and deceits of all kinds, what may be termed pandemonium has been produced on earth by the great masterpiece of human wisdom, prophesied of in 2 Timothy ii., as exhibited for ages in Italy, with its millions of tortured, burnt alive and buried alive, drowned, slaughtered, immured, violated, and assassinated human beings that have been so destroyed to that end.

The angels who brought the message of goodwill from above towards men can scarcely be supposed to have brought that which was not true from there, and to have been instruments to deceive poor human beings. Their message was certainly true ; and although the idea of our Saviour *taking vengeance* appears a strong figure, as contrasted with all we know of His consideration for sinners, who are led away by their lusts or their cupidity, or by any of the many evils that man is prone to, yet there are passages in our Saviour's intercourse with the Scribes and Pharisees, or the priests and ministers, that would justify the expectation that such a prophecy will yet be fulfilled upon them ; for neither God's voice from above, " This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased ; *hear ye Him*" ; nor the assurance of angels of peace and goodwill toward men ; nor our Saviour's words, " If a man love Me, he will keep My words," " The sheep follow " Me : " for they know " My " voice " ; nor His cautions, example, and precepts are sufficient when weighed against St. Paul's words now. The strong confidence is rather thereby confirmed, that every priest and minister and converted man has, when

following his own convictions, whilst fully persuaded, as a late eminent author observes, "of his having a pope for the guidance of himself and others in his own belly." The subtlety with which each is able to produce authorities from the Scriptures, and especially from St. Paul's epistles, to support his views is of such a character that, considering these have often been written figuratively for the use of people in greatly differing and widely separated ages, and that St. Paul was really a Pharisee of the Pharisees, not much wonder can be felt at the violence of their controversies or the hopelessness of their dissent from each other being reconciled.

Our Saviour's words only are wholly suited to the different classes of persons that will ever exist in all ages and in all countries.

The results of evil teaching upon the multitude can only be clearly perceived after long courses of years, during which the teaching has been bringing forth its fruit. Thus in Italy and in other Roman Catholic countries may be seen the result or fruit of Roman Catholic teaching, and of faith in St. Peter, in the abandonment of all religion by the people and the absolute desecration of the Sabbath day, by devoting it to dissipation and amusement after the performance of some ritualistic service at the churches in the earlier part of the day, not attended by many in any of them; whilst in Protestant countries, where the law has protected the person from violence, St. Paul's epistles have perpetuated the errors of the Scribes and Pharisees, to the destruction of our Saviour's teaching, or Christianity.

A very noticeable thing is the ability with which priests and ministers are able to distinguish and to determine the

evil which the Almighty creates and the evil which He does not create, endeavouring to draw a line, in fact, between moral evil and evils that may not be classed as moral ones—failing necessarily, as all attempts of man must fail, to limit the Almighty.

In view of the terrible teaching that the devil is the creator of evil for our destruction, and yet that there is an almighty God who creates that which is good for our salvation, it is better not to send missionaries to the heathen to teach *them* thus, as they are *generally* in a much better moral condition without them than many of the populations of our great towns and cities after ages and ages of such teaching; indeed, the expression of their faces will bear very favourable comparison with the expression of many of the faces of those who have been all their lives subject to the preaching of hell fire and torment for ever for sinners. And it may therefore be concluded that such teaching will not improve them in any way, but may make them unbelievers in any Almighty God who could permit a creator of evil to exist, or to fill them with enmity towards Him for it, and for not destroying "the devil" and everything that is evil, as is the case with so many millions of civilized people now.

Looking at the resolute determination to support the belief in the existence of the devil, and hell fire, and torment for ever for sinners, taught by Scribes and Pharisees, or priests and ministers, in His time as well as now, and by all pagans and idolaters, and its results, no one should be surprised at the declarations of our Saviour that the publicans and the harlots entered heaven before the priests and ministers; that evil was not to be

resisted openly by His followers, except when it might be necessary to sell their coats to buy swords to defend themselves; that the Father judged no man; that the Scribes and Pharisees who resolutely resisted Him and His teaching would enter upon never-ending correction and the severest spiritual punishment after death; that their ways and their teaching had only made them hypocrites; that while they were scrupulously clean, and whilst punctilious in little matters and attending to small duties, they utterly forgot the weightier matters of the law—justice and mercy—and were guilty of the worst of all blasphemies about Beelzebub, or the devil; that *many* would come from the east and the west, or the north and the south, or from the 450 millions of China and the 250 millions of India, and from the hundreds of millions elsewhere, who had never heard of Him, and that they would be received into the kingdom, when they who thought themselves the very children of Abraham and of God should be cast out; or that they were to fall into the soil and die if they were to bear forth much fruit, but not to eat with gluttons and drink with drunkards; that they were to go into all the world to teach and preach the good news of salvation to every creature; that they who believed this would be saved from their sins, and those who refused to believe it would remain in them.

There is a noticeable difference in our Saviour's declaration before He was crucified, that, unless people repented, they would perish, and His assurance, after His resurrection, that those who would not believe His message of the good news of salvation to every creature would be condemned to remain in their sins.

In the face of the conflicting matter in the Old Testament, the jarring sects, and the discordant religions that existed in our Saviour's time, it was a necessity that there should be some standard whereby all men might perceive the strait and the narrow way to eternal life and happiness: hence the words from heaven, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; *hear ye Him*"; hence His own repeated cautions against listening to any other but Himself; hence His last caution against false Christs, many of whom He saw would arise after Him. And if St. Paul claimed, or it was claimed for St. Paul, that our Lord's very spiritual Self was in him, it would amount to the same thing: hence His assurance that His sheep would know His voice, and that they would not follow the voice of any other, however seemingly good and inspired it might be; hence the simplicity of His teaching to the multitude; and hence even the very character of His commands to His disciples, by which so many have gone astray, simply from not understanding them, and from want of faith in Him only, *to be wise as serpents*, and harmless as doves; to become as little children after they had been born again, or they should in no case be in happiness; to be so lowly as to wash one another's feet, if it were necessary; to love one another; to lay hands on the sick and to heal them: hence even His directions after His resurrection and His earnestness at all times to direct all persons to Himself and His teaching only. All, all in vain! St. Paul's sophistries and subtleties have been increased and multiplied a hundred-fold; they have done that which direct opposition could never have effected; and St. Paul's words are preached from with additional sophistries and subtleties with a persever-

ance that would have done honour to our Lord's words by those who are certainly St. Paul's followers, and who know his voice perfectly.

No parts of the Scriptures are undervalued by making His words and His example the test by which to try them, nor is the great feast diminished thereby. The combined wisdom and the history of the highest race of mankind is no unimportant possession, accompanied, as it is, by the records of miraculous care and protection, and of miraculous chastisements and corrections.

There is, perhaps, no more important part of the old Scriptures than that contained in Deuteronomy xxx. 15—20. Moses declares that he has set before the Israelites life and good, death and evil—and this, too, without ascribing evil to the devil; and he did not speak to the priests only, but, as it is described in Deuteronomy xxxii. 44, “in the ears of the people.”

It may be supposed that, as we live under another dispensation, the words contained in part of Deuteronomy xxvii. 14 to the end of chap. xxix. do not apply to us; but everyone who sincerely strives to draw near to God will surely have some experiences that will teach him differently, without the aid of any priest or any minister, and he may remember our Lord's words, that “*the wicked perish*,” as being in perfect accordance with these words of Moses.

The favourite apostle appears to have most nearly followed the teaching of our Saviour in all he wrote, but none could equal the simplicity and excellence of Christ Himself in His words.

It may be inferred that disobedience to One who was sent to teach the right way perfectly, as well as to show

what was wrong, with attesting powers, who it was necessary should live for years on earth, clothed in a body of flesh and blood, and who proclaimed Himself to be *the* Son of God, would entail very serious consequences of a spiritual character. The laying of hands on the sick according to His directions would excite, for instance, benevolent and kindly feelings, which would increase indefinitely ; whilst any assumption of ability to give to another the greatest spiritual power of which we have any idea, without any testimony manifesting the gift, would excite feelings of pride, and render people proud, vain, and confident in an equally increasing degree—indeed, the pride of a priest or a minister has become proverbial in all countries ; and the selfishness and want of feeling for others that may be observed in proud people would indicate a very different description of spiritual life for the guidance of the people to that displayed by our Saviour ; so that such an assumption has a different description of spiritual life, and has no power over any spiritual testimonies whatever of a description to be desired.

What the full consequences must be of such an assumption, when called to give an account in another world for acts done here, we can only imagine by comparison with the contempt that we may know would here attend presuming to have temporal power where none really existed on the one hand, and the shame that would be the natural result of being discovered to have none on the other.

Whether ridicule may attend, or what other correction may exist, we have no knowledge ; but our Saviour has portrayed much under the figure of salting with fire, that everyone will be more or less acquainted with hereafter, He

says, although there are those who lay hands on one another who declare they are able to free from such consequences ; and there are people who believe them and do not care to think on the subject, and are quite contented to forget it.

The imposition of evil teaching on the multitude is to be accounted for only upon the ground that the multitude is blind to it from being occupied so much in their necessary avocations, and that it is but too willing to leave spiritual matters to those who are paid to devote themselves to them, and who are expected, therefore, to understand them. But that there is a terrible time coming upon the priests and ministers and heads of Churches of all nations Scripture plainly foretells. It is called the day of the Lord, resulting from the utter want on all sides of any recognition that God is the Creator of both good and evil, the blasphemous declaration that the devil is the creator of evil and that sinners will be cast into torment and fire for ever driving millions into infidelity and unbelief ; also from the vain attempts of priests and ministers to destroy the evil, even to the extent of taking away liberty and life, and from the great pride and vanity which has become proverbial in both priests and ministers. Indeed, by their being bowed down to as the representatives of God, and of that which is right and good, they become failures of the most lamentable character. If the example of our Saviour is for our guidance, those who have been born again are but too often no better but rather worse than others, evidencing that only the common law restrains them from bearing in the present day even worse fruit than before now.

Tyndale, who translated the Scriptures into English, and was afterwards put to death by the Church of Rome,

declares : “ In putting departed souls in heaven, hell, and purgatory, you destroy the arguments wherewith Christ and Paul prove the resurrection. What God doth with them, we shall know when we come to them. The true faith putteth *the resurrection*, which we be warned to look for every hour. The heathen philosophers, denying that, did put that the souls *did ever live* ; and the Pope joineth the spiritual doctrine of Christ and the fleshly doctrine of philosophers together—things so contrary that they cannot agree. And because the fleshly-minded Pope consenteth unto HEATHEN DOCTRINE, therefore he corrupteth the Scriptures to establish it. If the souls be in heaven, tell me why they be not in as good case as the angels be ? And, then, what cause is there of the resurrection ? ” This heathen teaching, however, is now considered by those calling themselves Christian priests and ministers *an important Christian doctrine*, or a doctrine of our Saviour’s ; indeed, it forms an important part of what all preachers now build on, or with.





CHAPTER III.

Apostolical Succession—Death of Ananias and Sapphira—Worse Conduct in Peter—Emulated by Priests and Ministers—Spiritual Life may be Used or Abused—Abraham's Teaching Ignored—Idolatry and Prayer Meetings Compared—Inattention to the Difference of Language Applied to Different Classes—"The Devil" the Creator of Priests and Ministers.

THE laying on of hands is what is commonly known as the apostolical succession, and it must be tried by the Saviour Himself and His words, "The tree is known by his fruit"; and surely upon no other tree that there is any record of, either in Scripture or in profane history, can there be found such abominable, such dreadful fruit. There is no crime, there is no vileness, there is no tyranny, there is no cruelty, there is no pride or vanity, there are no excesses of any kind—but what may be found upon it in the utmost profusion and luxuriance. That any section of mankind should in any way be deceived by the shameful presumption that the Holy Ghost is thereby conveyed only testifies to the gullibility, to the blindness, and the willingness to be deceived of poor, weak human nature where religion is concerned, devoid, as it is, of any of the testimonies which our Saviour Himself has declared should attend the gift of the Holy Ghost, in which there is no promise of any gift of oratory or of preaching whatever ;

although there is no doubt that spiritual assistance of some kind is allowed to every sincere man, notwithstanding his being in error in some things, if he is desirous of teaching others, although in his sincerity he may teach wrongly. Why this is so is quite incomprehensible, otherwise than that it is permitted by Him who is incomprehensible, and that we have the record in Scripture of spiritual influences of almost every kind; of spirits influencing priests and prophets to lie, of others influencing builders, of spirits influencing armies and the armies being destroyed, and spiritual power of almost every imaginable description recorded in holy Writ; but of nothing so vile as has attended the laying on of hands or the apostolical succession, of which the indisputable records of the Christian Church show a degradation that would stamp such dishonour and disgrace upon any succession of a temporal kind that no one who reflects would on any consideration like to belong to it, because they would receive anything but honour if they did.

St. Peter's anger at the conduct of Ananias and Sapphira, and their deaths, which he *willed*, and his laying on of hands after to make men ministers or priests, show forth the truth of the belief that St. Peter established the Church of Rome—the condition for ages and ages of that Church is proof of it—over-ruling the law, and making it absolutely subservient to its purpose of making men better. Its murders, its tortures, its slaughters, its cruelties, and its tyranny over the nations have been only lately indeed, and most unwillingly, brought into subjection by the law. St. Peter's anger brought forth much evil fruit, and it but too surely animated large sections of those calling themselves

Christians : it has indeed been a true apostolical succession in this respect. Nor was the Church of Rome singular in this succession ; the spirit was continued in the branches as well, and Calvinists and Lutherans and Puritans took life without healing the sick or giving life to anyone ; whilst the strong desire to be exempted from the control of the law, and to be themselves the fountain of law, continually breaks forth and manifests itself in priests and ministers. No wickedness has ever produced such terrible results as did this wicked spiritual act of St. Peter.

St. Peter was told by his Master that He came to save men's lives, and not to destroy them, and that he was to heal the sick, to feed His sheep, and to go into all the world and teach the people, and tell them the good news of the salvation of every creature, as opposed to the doctrine of hell fire and torment for ever for sinners of the self-righteous and the ascetics and the proud, of the pagans and priests ; and great spiritual power was given him, for he was a favourite with his Master, that he might the more easily accomplish this. After his Master had been crucified by the priests he found some of those he was appointed to teach had deceived him ; he at once denounced them, and his angry *will* was the cause of their death.

This would be like a servant sent into a country in great ignorance or darkness, with full power to make the Government known and to save their lives, to teach them good things, and in every way to improve the people, who, after being so sent, began by abusing the power given him by putting some of them to death for deceiving him in a matter of his own arrangement ; for, however suitable to our Saviour's course of living with His disciples, only by volun-

tary contributions from others, nothing could well be more unsuitable for the multitude. Nor is there anything that He taught the multitude that would justify a large number of persons in selling all that they had and making a common purse out of which to live afterwards.

The record that, in St. Peter's anger, and at his will, Ananias and Sapphira fell dead presents a field for meditation but little observed; it was in direct contradiction to all the miracles and all the teaching of our Saviour; and it was a manifest disregard of the merciful treatment he had received so short a time before, when he, with oaths and curses, denied that he knew our Saviour—a much more serious offence. He must also have known that our Lord, not only spared Judas, but absolutely associated with him, knowing him to be a thief. Yet, notwithstanding the wickedness of Peter's anger against Ananias and Sapphira, there are the records of a miraculous power continued to Peter: he healed the sick, he was miraculously released from prison, and he was selected to instruct Cornelius.

It must be evident, however, that Peter acted wickedly, and that to attribute such an act to the Holy Ghost, the Comforter that animated our Saviour, was utterly inconsistent. It would appear that, where miraculous power is given, the person on whom it is conferred may use it in accordance with our Saviour's example and precepts, or he may abuse it by following the natural dictates of his own mind and judgment, upon which there will be approval or disapproval hereafter. But Peter's conduct will always meet with the approval of most priests and ministers, inasmuch as it will always be looked upon as a display of that power which it was necessary should be given them to enable them to be

effectual workers in the Lord's vineyard, without which, in some way to coerce others, they must be utterly useless : hence the divisions, the denunciations, the judgments, the burnings, the slaughters, the torturings, the seclusions, the self-righteousness, the living sacrifices, the total abstinences, the holinesses, and the fiercenesses that are so heavy a burden to mankind, all of which our Saviour took so much pains to obliterate and to do away with. Nor should it be forgotten that St. Paul charged St. Peter, long afterwards, with great hypocrisy, which may be construed as a species of lying.

The gift of spiritual life and the gift of understanding, and knowledge, and wisdom, and light, of power to heal, of kindness, and of the glory that He can impart to those who are obedient to Him, and who are as " he that serves " ; who show forth their love to Him by keeping His words ; who know His voice and refuse to follow the voice of any other whatever—are quite different things ; and the spiritual pride and violence, the vanity, the conceit, the stiff-necks, and the extremes of all kinds to which many of those who have had spiritual life given to them will go, and by which their evil spiritual life may easily be known, can only be observed fully in Churches that believe and know from experience that every one must be born again. Wesley's reproofs to some of his preachers, calling them " vain, conceited animals," scarcely convey sufficiently the conditions that may be observed amongst such persons, or what moving heaven and earth to make proselytes may produce afterwards.

Worse still, the Lord has told them what He would have them to do, and they refuse to do it, and are continually

telling Him what they would have Him to do, whilst they do the very things that He has told them not to do, with the absolute knowledge that He had that they were of the very worst spiritual character, and subject to the worst spiritual correction and consequences hereafter. He has confined Himself to simple directions to them how to pray ; they have no limits to their directions to Him as to what they want, and what He is to do for them, or for others, of every imaginable kind and description, in long prayers at prayer-meetings, as well as in other ways at other times.

The consequences of disobedience to our Saviour's example and directions may be better understood by comparing it to that of a farmer going away and leaving his servants, and telling them that they must each privately gather certain seed necessary for them, on six mornings of working days only, before the sun waxed hot, and that he showed them by His example that it was better even to gather it before the sun got up at all, cautioning them that if they did not gather it as he directed they would find it damaged and indeed offensive and injurious. What would a looker-on say if he saw that the farmer's servants ignored his instructions, and absolutely went on the seventh day and on the evening of every Wednesday in a body, with the greatest publicity, to gather the seed, and utterly set at naught his commands ? He would surely say that they were very disobedient and faithless, or unbelieving, or very wicked servants, and richly deserved all the evils which using the damaged seed brought upon them. The farmer who knew best, of course, had warned them, so that their headstrong and wilful conduct was inexcusable ; and the quarrels with one another about it, the refusal of it

by the people who came to market to buy it, and their great dislike of it generally would just be the result which such conduct would certainly produce.

The astounding presumption, of presuming that by the laying on of the hands of three clergymen the Holy Ghost is given to another, will in its own time meet its just reward ; men in no way noted for their wisdom, their knowledge, or their understanding, to whom no one would seek for any counsel, and whose spiritual might would only create laughter by any attempt to show it forth, and whose fear of the Lord can only be known by the most abject dread and terror, though pretending to be united to Him thus. How far those who are willingly deceived by this presumption may escape punishment cannot of course be known here ; but as those on whom hands are laid, any more than they who lay them on, manifest no gifts to judge by, this great ignorance and want of perception may shield them from much that they would otherwise be held accountable for ; as St. Paul testifies of those in great ignorance or darkness, the Lord winks at much that He would otherwise correct.

Now, before a man can impart faith to another, he must have faith himself from which to give it, and St. Paul says some men have none ; others, he says, become the children of God by faith, and receive the spirit that was promised. The wicked servants of the farmer were of those that had none, or they would have gathered the seed at the prescribed time and in the prescribed manner. Or, if they ever had it and were obedient at one time, they had become disobedient, and were only so much the worse than those who had none, because their master was so much the more deceived in them thereby.

It should also be remembered that after receiving spiritual life the person may use or abuse the life he has received to the benefit or the injury of himself or others. Thus the Scribes and Pharisees who had received spiritual life brought themselves and others into a worse and still worse condition, the expression even of their faces changing for the worse and becoming sad and pale, their fierceness or pride or ignorance blinding them to this, moving heaven and earth to make a proselyte, who became through their teaching ten times worse than he was before.

In olden time the morning stars gathered their manna or their seed before daylight, and sang for joy after the sun rose; evening stars gather their manna and their seed at a forbidden time, going into darkness, where they will surely be when *the Sun of Righteousness rises*, and when all the morning stars will be singing for joy in His light.

As the spirit of prayer is nowhere recognized in the Scriptures, and was denounced by our Saviour as practised by the Scribes and Pharisees, it would have been practised by evil spirits that St. Paul said could change themselves into angels of light to deceive, and that St. John said he saw so many had gone forth into the world.

Faith or belief in the devil as the creator of evil for our destruction necessarily destroys faith or belief in God as the Creator of evil and of good for our benefit, and for the development of our intellect and our intelligence and true repentance, and renders various teachings of Scripture inconsistent with one another. Sin or evil is not thereby made less evil or less sinful or the destruction of the impenitent sinner or evil doer the less certain, or the gift

of Christ as an atonement, to draw men to repentance, the less precious. This is the key, in fact, to the Scriptures, and priests and ministers may thereby perceive why they are particularly called on to "be still, and know that He is God."

Whenever blasphemers and blasphemous pretensions are recognized and widely denounced by some great power or by the multitude, the world will experience a resurrection to better things, and the minds of the multitude will be as much released from destruction as their bodies have been by the protection afforded by the growth of the tree of life, the common law of states and nations that groaned still more than they do now under the abuse of clerical power and clerical ignorance, that claimed then and still claims the appointment and indwelling of the Holy Ghost, in all those who have been ordained. There was no alternative with them formerly between allowing the heresy of unbelief in their representations of all kinds to spread, or its utter extermination by violence. Only the tree of life, the great common law, protects multitudes now from the same evils that are recorded to have been inflicted upon them before now by holy men ; and not only upon the multitude, but upon one another as well sometimes. Thus to establish and secure prestige and power must necessarily be the cause of the downfall of the clergy, and the prophecy that the stars will fall from heaven, and such heavens be rolled up as a scroll, will be fulfilled.

Abraham is called in God's holy Word the friend of God because he had full faith in Him, and taught afterwards that concubinage was better than the moral condition that prevailed in his time ; but, by the same rule, those now

called Christian priests who encourage celibacy must be the enemies of God. An extensive enquiry, made by competent persons, resulted in their conclusion that "it may be laid down as an axiom that all restrictions upon lawful intercourse with women multiply illicit connections." Celibates, therefore, destroy faith in Him, and, if the conclusion be correct, their condition is infinitely worse thereby; whilst their teaching and preaching drive the multitude into infidelity and wretchedness and idolatry and ignorance and even hatred of Him, of His holy Word and its teachings; and their sham miracles and ways of making water holy, and men holy, and women holy, and garments holy, and ground holy, with holy times and seasons and places and days, all put barriers to our Saviour's teaching and to His example that very, very few surmount here, giving honour to one another and knowing nothing of the honour that God gives.

That the children of Israel returned to idolatry, which had been denounced and condemned, immediately after Moses had ascended into the mount; and that people calling themselves Christians held prayer-meetings and made long prayers, that had been denounced and condemned by our Saviour, immediately after His ascension; or that Cain, who was a priest, slew Abel; and that Peter slew Ananias and Sapphira—are parallel records: but to claim the presence and assistance of the Holy Ghost for such acts of disobedience on the one hand, or for idolatrous proceedings on the other, is a miserable delusion, whether people are dressed in plain long black or in the idolatrous clothing of long garments and scarlet and fine linen. The spirit that animates those who commit evil acts, or who are otherwise disobedient,

has an existence in them without any doubt, and spiritual manifestations may accompany them, or the records of Scripture are untrue. People may still hold Scriptural truths whilst they are guilty of spiritual errors in many ways without being destroyed; but to assert that they are assisted by the Holy Ghost in it is to be more ignorant than Elymas the Sorcerer was, the ignorance displayed being greater.

No foreigner will hear in his own tongue now the words spoken by such Christians, whatever other spiritual assistance they may have; nor will there be any perceptible difference in the conduct or conditions of the various sects or divisions of people who are called Christians; but His mercy is the greater the more they need it, for it is unlimited here, and His sacrifice is an abundant atonement. There is to be a judgment on such matters hereafter nevertheless; and that those who persistently harden or deceive themselves with evil teaching will not meet His approbation is very certain, whatever else may befall them.

Many teach and proclaim and profess celibacy as being necessary to that holiness to the Lord claimed to be possessed by them, and there are few comparatively that are not imbued with the idea that there is something in matrimony objectionable in a spiritual sense. But the Scriptures teach that matrimony is a duty which every man, and particularly every priest, owes to the Lord; and the result is, that a heavy curse from the Lord afflicts those who teach thus and profess so to live in holiness to the Lord, whereby they will be so manifested hereafter that they will be known to everyone, all their cleanness and white and other raiment availing them nothing. In other matters

endeavours are made, condemned by the Word, to deter people from using wines and other mercies, because some are unable to do so without abusing them ; whilst it is as much a duty to God to partake thankfully of the juice of the grape, whether fermented or not, as it is to thank Him and to partake of any other benefit which He has conferred upon us. Excesses are, like manures, very offensive, however necessary in the world they may be.

The Pharisees, or the priests and ministers, were always employed either fighting "the devil" themselves or leading on the multitude to do so ; and their righteousness in doing this was made too manifest to the multitude for it to be expected that it should have condemned them. Nor could all our Saviour's miracles convince the people that the ways of the Scribes and Pharisees, or the priests and the ministers, were wrong and utterly subversive of faith in God and of a happy spiritual existence, or that their ways brought themselves and others on to the worst spiritual condition. And so great was their influence from their respectability in the estimation of the multitude that there was more difficulty in obtaining His condemnation from Pilate than there was in getting Him crucified after it, by the very priests and ministers who had seen His miracles, had heard His teaching, and who had had every opportunity of watching the example of better things He was to everyone. Nor if He came again now in the same guise, so poorly dressed and with the same humility, so quiet and so unostentatious, would He receive better treatment, excepting that the law would certainly now protect Him from being imprisoned and crucified. He would be expelled from Churches where the devil and hell fire were considered an

important Christian doctrine; and it is not unlikely that He would be denounced as *not* a Christian.

The terrible consequences that attend this belief that the devil is the creator of evil for our destruction cannot well be over-estimated. Independently of the blasphemies attending it, it brings men instantly into direct antagonism with the Almighty, and with *His ways*, for the improvement and spiritual instruction of those He has created. They are ever devising means of their own to make men better, either by total abstinence from intoxicating liquors by all mankind, or by fasting, or by obtaining from them confessions of sins, and by penances and forgiveness, and rites and ceremonies, to effect the end they have in view; or else by meeting together in bodies and making prayers against all sorts and characters of evil without an idea, apparently, that these very evils are the things by which they are best taught better things, but only by private and unobserved contention and prayer against them. By the courses they take they only plant worse evils continually and destroy the possibility of their ever getting spiritually better. They do, in fact, only make one another spiritually worse by their *ways*, whilst the very evils that they are always so anxious to destroy are produced more and more abundantly, showing the helplessness of the endeavour to work against the Almighty's *ways*; a lesson continually taught by the Scriptures without affecting the confidence in the slightest degree of good men in their ability to make men better by their *ways*.

That the Scribes and Pharisees were also lawyers would have been a great advantage to the people, inasmuch as they, in consequence of their education, would readily have perceived the inconsistency of addressing them from

unsuitable texts of Scripture, and thus one of the great evils of preaching in the present day would have been prevented. As instances, one minister has just taken as his text, "Ye are of your father the devil," and thoroughly disgusted many; another has taken the message to the angel of the Church of Laodicea to a congregation who are properly engaged in mercantile pursuits and in the endeavour to acquire wealth; and a third takes our Saviour's words to His disciples, "Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you": but so far as loving one another, or laying hands on the sick, or being like little children, neither minister nor people would care to be tried by their obedience to these commands, which are some of His most important ones.

A more deadly imposition has never been practised upon the multitude since the creation of the world than that which Christian priests and ministers have practised upon it by threatening hell fire and torment for ever on sinners, with an absolute knowledge that the denunciations of our Saviour, which they use as their authority for their threats, were spoken by Him upon the priests and ministers who crucified Him, or to His own apostles to deter *them* from evil courses. And Pauline priests and ministers have taken these words of His to preach from to the multitude, because in their wisdom they have supposed they were useful to deter people from evil, and therefore to be upheld as an important Christian doctrine, blinded thereby to the woful results of hatred and animosity and spiritual pride and vanity and infidelity and defiance and weakness and prostration of mind and deadly fear and terror, with which every community has been filled thereby. Charity and

forbearance and brotherly feeling for error and sin and the remembrance that all hearts are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, even in the very best of us, and tender mercy and loving-kindness and all the fruits of the Spirit, if not buried in forgetfulness, are yet smothered by the foul weeds that such teaching has produced. His teaching is that he that called his brother a fool was in danger of the correcting fire of hades, and that the houses of those that would not listen to Him would fall when the storms and troubles of life came upon them, being the utmost extent of His words to the multitude. As their faith has been, so verily it has been unto them; and self-righteousness and total abstinence and long prayers and regular prayer-meetings and other spiritual abominations denounced by our Saviour have absolutely become Christian virtues, and are believed to have been taught by our Saviour Himself. When the great English mind once grasps the fact that God is the Creator of good and evil *for our benefit*; that without evil there could be no good, no intellect, no intelligence, and no progress; that *the devil* and hell fire and torment for ever is but the creation or the blaspheming of priests and ministers to make people good; that God's holy Word has been tampered with and adulterated by them to suit their views; and that this creation of theirs to make people good has had a directly contrary effect, and has wofully increased the evil and caused great wretchedness and division and hatred and malice and pride and uncharitableness and self-righteousness—when this takes place suffering humanity will be in good hands to be protected in the future, aided, as it will be, by the great populations of

the Continent. Though nothing can compensate for the sufferings of the past, the danger will be that the reaction may carry them too far, and that inoffensive but deluded men in the ministry may be made sufferers too greatly.

In great movements, however, either for good or evil this must necessarily be the case. It is to be hoped that the light of the *evening time* will be so shed abroad that much in this respect will be obviated or alleviated.

To St. Peter, the great teacher of the Church of Rome, a grand temple has been raised at Rome, and hecatombs of people sacrificed ; to St. Paul, the great teacher of Protestantism, a great temple has been raised in London, and divisions without number have resulted, and hatred and malice, often to the most bitter end.

To assume that this was fruit from His tree who gave a new commandment to His followers, that they should love one another, would be to suppose that they had utterly refused His guidance and to have adopted rather a command to hate one another, so rancorous and so lively has been the disunion, and so terrible has been the religious strife, that has existed, and that still, in fact, exists.





CHAPTER IV.

Evil and Good Progress together—The Apostles' Creed—The New Translation of the Lord's Prayer—Priests and Ministers to be known by their Fruits—The Talmud and its Teaching—The Apocrypha—Priests and Ministers of the same Spirit as Scribes and Pharisees—The Gist of our Saviour's Teaching—Comparison between our Saviour's Teaching and Priests and Ministers—The Fiery Punishment denounced on Priests and Ministers now inverted and used by them upon the Multitude—Miss Bird's "Japan"—Consequences foretold by our Saviour—An Illustration—Intolerance—Confused and Inconsistent Teaching.

FROM statistics taken by the French Government some years since it was noticed that with the increase of education there was a corresponding increase of numbers from amongst the educated classes imprisoned; and it shows that evil and good must ever progress together.

If every man were taught to understand that God is the Creator of both good and evil for his benefit, for his intellect, for his intelligence, and for progress, how mercifully would every man view his fellow-man with consideration and wonder and respect, but *without trusting him*, of whatever colour or condition he might be! How would the proud and stiff-necked man walk softly! How would the humble man walk observingly! How would those given to lusts of all kinds endeavour to restrain themselves! How would God be loved! How would Christ

be worshipped for opposing Scribes and Pharisees, or priests and ministers, to the death, who believed in *the devil* and blasphemed His Holy Spirit! How would His sacrifice for the perishing be valued! How would His teaching be remembered! How seldom would any forget God, their incomprehensible Creator, in their youth, and how earnestly would they call on Him who is able to save out of the lowest depths!

Those who value the records of the actual belief of the apostles should recollect the precise form of the Apostles' Creed, in which there is no mention of the devil. Ruffinus says it was composed by the apostles themselves. In some of the old copies the words "descended into hades" are wanting, but as it now stands it is found in the works of St. Ambrose and Ruffinus, who lived in the fourth century. This would show as conclusively as possible that "devil" is a mere figurative expression for a *spiritual* evil doer, or evil teacher, or persecutor. Nothing could so well illustrate that utter loss of faith in God as this belief or faith in the devil.

It is worthy of notice how persistently priests and ministers hold fast to their faith or belief in the devil, even in the new translation of the New Testament. Advantage has been taken of the opportunity to endeavour to establish it, upon the authority of the Lord's Prayer, by changing the authorized translation from "deliver us from evil" into "deliver us from the evil one"; but the correcting fire of hades is still hell fire, as might be expected. Neither in the sermon on the mount nor in our Lord's address at the last supper is there any such instruction inculcated—the remark made by the recorder as to Satan entering into

Judas, after our Lord had given him the sopped bread, would be just as applicable to anyone who was seduced by circumstances or by evil thoughts to do a wrong action.

There is no class of men whatever who have wrought so much that has retarded progress and civilization and friendly intercourse, injured the cause of science, and caused so much darkness and misery and wretchedness and hatred towards God and towards men and one another in the world as Scribes and Pharisees, or priests and ministers, and so-called converted *men* have, notwithstanding many estimable qualities in them—and this independently of the lives that have been taken by them before now without law, by open massacre, in open warfare, by process of law, by burning alive, by tortures of every imaginable description, by immuring alive, by assassinations, by strangulation in secrecy and in darkness, by charges of witchcraft, by poison and treachery of all kinds—through their determination to rule and to guide others aright, and through utterly ignoring our Saviour's example and being amongst others as "he that serves," holy, learned, earnest, self-denying men, determined to do good and filled with vile confessions, in many instances to overflowing, in trying to do so, but imbued with the belief that their duty was to fight "*the devil*"; without an idea that their right course was to "*be still, and know that I am God*," and that their only duty was to conduct His regular Sabbath worship with reverence and decency and humility, whilst teaching the humblest things faithfully and earnestly.

These are the false prophets and teachers against whom our Saviour warned the multitude (Matt. vii. 15), and who are prophesied of by St. John in his first epistle (iv. 1), and also by St. Peter in his second epistle (ii. 1). They

may be, indeed, known by their fruits, not only by the condition of the multitude in England, but in every land that is called Christian—where the lower orders after centuries of such teachers are not so intelligent as those called savages and heathens, and where the better educated are often only either the more superstitious and the more subservient to the designs of the clergy of all denominations, or they have cast them and their superstitions off—in too many cases for infidelity.

It would be difficult to estimate the spiritual condition of so-called Christian communities out of their judgments on one another, and the teaching that the good go to heaven and that the bad go into hell fire and torment for ever, the divisions caused by it, the subdued personal ill-feeling, the contempt they hold one another in, the uncharitableness, the conceits, the stiff-necks, the total abstinences, the hypocrisies, the want of all thankfulness for the tree of life, or the law that now keeps their hands from off one another, or for the mercies that He has conferred upon them, that they may use or abuse, but not condemn, at their pleasure—these are but a few of the evil consequences arising out of it.

The priests and ministers, who were highly respected by the multitude, wholly disapproved of our Saviour in His day, and informed the people that He was a bad man ; that He wanted to destroy the law and the prophets. Nor did His blameless life or His wise words protect Him or convince them to the contrary. Priests and ministers now may be confident that they would not have done what they did of old, but human nature changes less than can be easily imagined ; and it is most certain that the same objections

that our Saviour made to the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, or the priests and ministers, might be urged against them as a body now—at least as strongly—with the same exceptions that we know there was to it then.

He told His disciples to go into all the world, and proclaim the good news of salvation, or happiness hereafter, to every creature, and to make known the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as against the teaching of pagans and Scribes and Pharisees alike of a good God, and a God of evil, and a hell of fire and torment; and it has been as much attended to as His command to them to love one another.

That this condition of things has arisen out of the adoption on all sides of the Manichean belief, the meaning of the word “heresy” will plainly show: it means pernicious and damnable doctrines, such as dissolve our obligations to Christian obedience, overthrow Christian worship, and subvert the foundation of Christian faith and hope. How far this will apply to those who are followers of St. Paul and St. Peter must be for such persons to consider.

As Jeremiah of old told the idolatrous priests of Israel that they were mad upon their idols, so might one now tell those addicted to the holding of holy days to saints, to crosses and images, and pictures, or to those who meet together to make long prayers and abuse of prayer-meetings, with as little hope of being heard or attended to, although our Saviour lost His life for denouncing such ways. No pope or conclave of bishops that ever sat together could have been persuaded to believe that the exhibition of images and crosses and relics and great pretensions to spiritual power and state, and the excess of religion

consequent thereon, would have produced widespread infidelity, independently of the bold and impious assertion that no one could be saved if outside the pale of their Church. Nor could any meeting of ministers encouraging the holding of regular and frequent prayer-meetings, and promoting the extremes of asceticism that St. Paul is represented in some parts of his epistles to advocate, be induced to believe that the result would be an increase of hypocrisy and other spiritual evils, the results in these cases being just the reverse of what, according to human calculation, the circumstances would lead them generally to expect. But our Saviour pointed this out in the most concise and striking language, and observation proves the correctness of His teaching.

God be thanked for the common law, the great tree of life, that only now protects their bodies from one another, and our bodies from similar treatment from those who now fill the seats of those who did these things, believing in *the devil* as the creator or author of evil, and laying hands on one another, and imparting, as they believe, God's Holy Spirit; confident, above all things, that they would not have done such things, if they had lived in their days, that the Scribes and Pharisees, or other priests or ministers, did.

There is even a worse and a wider field that might be shown; the light of evening, however, renders it unnecessary. There is forgiveness for all, even for Scribes and Pharisees, or priests and ministers, if they have erred and strayed in ignorance, and repent. Those only excluded are the Scribes and Pharisees, or priests and ministers, who, having the truth brought before them, resolutely refuse to believe it, and are persecutors of it and blasphemers of His Holy Spirit.

These, our Saviour says, shall never have forgiveness, neither in this world nor in the world to come.

There is an old and valuable work upon the Bible, called the Talmud, written before the advent of our Saviour by wise, if not by inspired, men, with which He appears to have been perfectly acquainted. It is very hard upon Scribes and Pharisees, or priests and ministers, who appear always to have misconstrued the Scriptures; it tells them as well as all priests, ministers, and converted men, to "find the key, and all Scripture riddles are solved." Priests and Pharisees and ministers are told that there is no more fruitful source of error than the meaning of Scriptural terms, but to turn it again and again, for everything is in it. They were told to study, to learn, and to search the Scriptures; everything was bound up therein. It was the beginning and the end.

Idleness and asceticism were utterly condemned, and learning only esteemed when joined to healthy bodily labour or work. Work or labour was given the most exalted place.

It says that "it is man's duty to thank God for the occurrence of evil even as for the occurrence of good; as it is written, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." It says further that "it was not the serpent that killed or preserved, but the trustful looking up or appeal to the Father," and that "death pays all debts."

Our Saviour drew many of His words from the Talmud and from the Apocrypha: the mote in the eye, for instance, from the Talmud; the hen gathering her chickens under her wings; the many called, and the few chosen; that nation

should rise against nation, and the beginning of sorrows or troubles; the stars falling from heaven; that iniquity should increase, as well as other matter, from the Apocrypha.

What a commentary for priests and ministers and converted men of the present day to be acquainted with the existence of, and yet perhaps never to have read, certainly not to have been made wiser by!

It is worthy of note, as showing the actual value entertained by priests and ministers and converted men of our Saviour's individual teaching by itself and of *His Words*, that the two books of Esdras in the Apocrypha, which He quoted from more than He did from any other individual book of Scripture, and which the apostles quoted largely from as well, have been excluded from the canon of the English version, and, as a deacon of a Church of a different denomination informed an enquirer, with an air of authority, "Our ministry condemns the Apocrypha altogether."

If anyone doubt that the same spirit animates many priests and ministers that animated many of the Scribes and Pharisees in our Saviour's time, let him make a trial of it by attempting to teach them that their ways are wrong, especially if the person endeavour to teach them in an humble spirit; let him, for instance, try to induce ministers of any denomination to believe that our Saviour denounced the abuse of prayer-meetings; that He always spoke appropriately to those He addressed, and that what He addressed to the Scribes and Pharisees, or to His own disciples, would be unsuitable to address to the multitude; that He suggested no subtlety in advising them to be wise as serpents,

or that He taught that a man, after being born again, may become anything but a little child, and even ten times worse than before—and he will experience something like the same result that similar attempts brought out from the Scribes and Pharisees on our Saviour, and hear, “Dost Thou teach us ?” as he probably never heard it before. No wonder that our Saviour, with His scarred and marred face, and His humble appearance, should have been subjected to such treatment as to induce Him to remark, in the parable of Dives and Lazarus, that such persons would not be persuaded, though one rose from the dead ; for Dives was a Pharisee and his brothers probably priests ; and this because priests and ministers do not discern that much that was spoken by the prophets of old was for the correction of the priests and ministers, and that they now use them most inconsistently for the correction of the people, to whom they are not applicable. And the same remark applies to the matter recorded as addressed by our Saviour to the Scribes and Pharisees, or the priests and ministers, in His day, as well as to His disciples.

Notwithstanding St. Paul’s very sensible remark to the Athenians, that they were “too religious,” the whole skill, wit, and ingenuity of priests and ministers, each in his own way, is to endeavour to make people still more and more religious. And as time goes on they are ever devising some new way to accomplish this, not only by adopting the total abstinences and the long prayers and prayer-meetings of the Scribes and Pharisees, producing now the very same results that our Saviour pointed out in His time, by holding fast to the idolatries of crosses and relics and altars and candles, and the displays and the subtleties of all kinds of

utter paganism. Now, by weeks of prayer-meetings at a time, by lovefeasts, by retreats for meditation before Lent, by false interpretations of Scripture, by religious processions and display, and by every imaginable way that heated imaginations can devise is this end sought to be accomplished. Nor is there anything too preposterous to be entered upon if it promise to have this now so greatly desired effect ; as if, in these latter days, these worst of all excesses should so prevail as to make it a greater necessity than ever that some great Being from above should be again sent to correct those whose contempt and abuse of our Saviour's instructions and commands, and what He taught, and want of faith in God, are producing worse spiritual evils than existed even in His time.

The gist of our Saviour's teaching is to recommend secret prayer and secret fasting and to avoid extremes, neither of which interfere with the public worship of God on the Sabbath day ; and those who call themselves His followers, who may be classed in two great divisions, insist on prayer-meetings at appointed times and seasons and total abstinences, with blowings of trumpets to call attention to their good works on the one hand or regularly appointed times and seasons for fasting and great show and ornament and pretension and images and relics on the other, the faces of both parties being equally sad. And, so far from any poor sick man sending to them to heal him, they are only sent for in extremes to prepare for death, and are said very often to hasten the end of those they go to !

Indeed, if a comparison be made between our Saviour and those who call themselves His ministers and priests, a complete inversion of many important things would be observed.

People are now told by them to fight the devil, or Satan, as the author of the evil that is within every man, assuring them that if they give him power over them they will be cast into hell fire; our Saviour told the people that there was nothing could harm them, but what was within them; it was the Almighty's strange way with man to make him intelligent and wise unto salvation through repentance.

Congregations are always being told how to be good, and ministers are desirous of being called good; our Saviour impressed on those to whom He spoke that the hearts of all men were deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, and that there was only One that was good, and reproved those that called Him good.

Priests and ministers are ever threatening hell fire and torment for ever on sinners; our Saviour made the heaviest denunciations on Scribes and Pharisees, and even on His own disciples, who, like the Scribes and Pharisees, had the testimony, and not on the multitude, if they were disobedient to Him, and did not heed His Word; and declared that everyone would need to be spiritually corrected, more or less, or, as He described it, to be salted with fire.

Priests and ministers continually pray that all evil may be destroyed and that they may be delivered from the world, the flesh, and the devil; our Saviour said that He prayed His followers might be kept from the evil, but not that they should be taken out of the world.

Our Saviour was seen once before daylight praying, and never joined prayer-meetings, condemning them and long prayers especially; priests and ministers hold prayer-meetings on Wednesday and other evenings, and make long prayers, in defiance of His caution.

Our Saviour said those that loved Him would keep or remember His words ; priests and ministers continually talk of their love to their fellow creatures, and take no heed to His words of the utmost importance.

Our Saviour told His followers to lay hands on the sick and they should be healed ; priests and ministers lay their hands upon strong, healthy men and tell them they have imparted the Holy Spirit to them, without the slightest testimony that they know anything of such spiritual things as would tend to show it forth, and never lay their hands on the sick at all.

Our Saviour told *His followers* that they were not to resist evil ; priests and ministers and converted men always loudly denounce sin and excess, purposing to destroy drunkenness and to compel men to keep sober.

Our Saviour called His followers' attention to His being amongst them as " he who served " ; priests and ministers are amongst others as " he who rules," seeking chief places and power of all kinds.

Our Saviour promised to make those who followed Him fishers of men, and knew consequently what was the skill and knowledge and practices of fishermen : that they must be as still as possible, and make no noise especially ; and that the fisherman's best time is in the morning before the dawn : just the very reverse of the ways of those who say they are followers of Him, but who are not very successful in catching men, whoever else they may lead captive.

But the great difference between the teaching of our Saviour and all other religions was that the fiery punishment hereafter, denounced by pagan priests of all times, and by priests and ministers of all phases of what is called

Christianity now, upon the multitude of sinners, was by our Saviour denounced upon the priests and ministers, not excepting His own disciples, if they were without feeling and did not take heed to His words, and fail to hear Him, or should not even know His voice, and follow His example and teaching humbly. The only known phase of Christianity in which this *important Christian doctrine* of hell fire and torment for ever for sinners hereafter is not denounced upon the multitude is that of the Gallas of Abyssinia, a remnant of the early Christian Church surviving without this contamination.

Miss Bird, in her "Japan," says: "Even at its best and highest there is an intense mournfulness about Japanese Buddhism, pointing, as it does, to an unattainable perfection and holding up the terrors of hell to those who fall short of it." How far this is applicable to the religious classes of all descriptions in Great Britain after ages of so-called Christianity, and how far the multitude are benefited by teachings so similar to Buddhism, must be for those interested in the subject to determine.

How completely our Saviour's teaching has been inverted and abused, and with what frightful results, the history of what is called Christianity in the past and the rapid spread of what is called infidelity in the present sufficiently proclaim. The resolute determination of those who form congregations to support the teaching and authority of priests and ministers upon the apparent propriety of such punishment for sinners hereafter, with the power and profit derived from it, induced our Saviour to proclaim that His teaching would not bring peace on earth, but a sword; and His word has been but too truly fulfilled. To endeavour to

destroy their teaching and authority has broken asunder the tenderest ties and the most loving relationships, and brought the sword upon poor Christians who have done so.

As an illustration of a terrible condition of things that exists still, and has indeed always exhibited itself in a Church, the following instance, which has just occurred, may be related. The wife of a gentleman holding a high appointment, and a magistrate, went over to this Church and induced her husband to do so also. Her sons were being educated at the Church school, when she discovered that they were being made acquainted with such immorality that she removed them. On this she was *ordered* by the priest in charge to send them back immediately, as he said that, being in that Church, they were saved. She however refused to permit them to return, and she was then excluded from the communion; upon which she seceded and went back to Protestantism. But so firm a hold had been obtained upon the mind of her husband that her influence was not sufficient to induce him again to follow her example.

It is singular that Bishop T—— should have been charged with demoralizing the boys of the school in his diocese, his absconding only saving him from the consequences that he would have been subject to from the facts that were testified to, and that the doctrines of these Churches, their reverence for crosses and images, and their ritualistic practices should so closely assimilate.

When the Churches had the law at their command nothing of this kind would have become known: the resistance of the lady to the command of the Church would have consigned her to a place from which no resistance

could have been made ; and the bishop need not have been under any apprehensions, as by the ecclesiastical law then known it required fourteen eyewitnesses to convict a bishop of a criminal offence !

The obligation of celibacy on a body of men will always be followed by instances of the same natural results being openly manifested from time to time, however much may be concealed, but it gives the priesthood a prestige with many that nothing else can ; whilst the peculiar training to enjoin secrecy, the communications made in the confessional by young persons of both sexes to young priests, the extraordinary activity amongst and their attention to the poor are advantages that, independently of their situation and great display and intolerance, are thoroughly understood by the priesthood.

Our Saviour commenced His ministry, as John the Baptist did, by attacking the intolerance of the Jews. John the Baptist told them that all *flesh* should see the salvation of God, and our Saviour was cast out of the synagogue, and was obliged to preach in the open air, after they had wondered at the wisdom with which He spake, because He told them that there were many widows in Israel in the time of the great famine when Elisha was sent to relieve the poor widow of Sarepta, and many lepers in Israel when Naaman the Syrian was healed, who received no help at all, although they believed that they were God's own children and looked upon others as dogs. But whilst John the Baptist and our Saviour endeavoured to destroy intolerance, St. Paul seems to be the very father of it in people who call themselves Christians.

Intolerance is the leading feature in almost every Christian

Church. A late Roman Catholic writer says: "Roman Catholicism is the most intolerant of creeds—it is intolerance itself, for it is the truth itself. A heretic examined and convicted by *the Church* used to be delivered over to the secular power and punished with death. Nothing has ever appeared to us more natural or more necessary. More than 100,000 persons perished in consequence of the heresy of Wycliffe, a still greater number by that of John Huss. *It would not be possible* to calculate the bloodshed caused by the heresy of Luther. *And it is not over yet.* After three centuries we are on the eve of a recommencement.

"The prompt repression of the disciples of Luther and a crusade against Protestantism would have spared Europe three centuries of discord and of catastrophes in which our country and civilization may perish.

"It was under the influence of such reflections that I wrote the phrase which has so excited the indignation of the journals: here it is. For my part I frankly avow my regret is, not only that they did not sooner burn John Huss, but that they did not equally burn Luther; and I regret further that there had not been some prince sufficiently pious and politic to have made a crusade against Protestants."

Admit that the Almighty, who is incomprehensible, is the Creator of both good and evil for our benefit, and all the records of the Gospel, or good news, are consistent and comprehensible—the message of the angels, at our Saviour's advent, of "glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men"; the prophecies of Simeon and Anna in the temple; the assurance of our Saviour that all sins and wickednesses will be forgiven, except the blas-

phemy against the Holy Spirit ; the denunciations of our Saviour on the priests and ministers, and even on His own disciples, if they were unfeeling or disobedient ; His great love and pity for the multitude, who were being evilly led by the priests ; the voice from above, " This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased ; *hear ye Him*" ; His declaration that " the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son " ; St. Paul's declarations, however mistaken otherwise, that all men will be saved, that Christ died for all men, that He bore the sins of the whole world on the cross, that all will rise again, both the just and the unjust—with much other matter, of which this is but suggestive, but quite consistent with the Almighty being the Creator of both evil and good for our benefit, and with our Saviour's love for sinners, and His declaration that there was none good but One above.

Otherwise, with the devil as the creator of evil for our destruction, and hell fire and torment for ever as a retributive punishment upon sinners, all is inconsistent and confused. The Almighty is vengeful and a destroyer, and has an opponent and a defier, and cannot be one God ; nor can He be Almighty. He cannot be loved, but He will be hated, if He could, and did not destroy " the devil." The first command to love God cannot be obeyed unless it is obeyed by our reason, and there is nothing reasonable about such a belief. Nor is there any spiritual teaching in our Saviour's words to support it, the highly drawn and figurative language from which it has proceeded being completely misapplied from design to make it subservient to what priests and ministers always believe to be necessary

to enable *them* to cure souls, to subdue sinners, and to make them obedient to their teaching; with the woful results that our Saviour foresaw and lamented, and with the revelations and the prophecies now clearly in the course of fulfilment thereby.





CHAPTER V.

Education of Priests and Ministers—Strange Views—Confusion and Dissension thereon—*Ex Cathedra*—Our Saviour's Teaching Lost—The Release of the Multitude—Infidelity the Result of the Ways of Priests and Ministers, and their Want of Light—Anticipated Changes—The Blight of what has hitherto been called Christianity upon the World—Differences in our Saviour's Teaching and St. Paul's—Tyndale's Account of the Council of Nice that Selected St. Paul's Epistles—Temporal Evil and Spiritual Evil—St. Paul's Doctrines.

THE variety of, and the extraordinary beliefs that pervade the colleges and schools for the education of priests and ministers may be illustrated by some extracts from a letter written by one who is deep in their learning, a clergyman, as a critique upon the first edition of this pamphlet. After questioning with reference to the view expressed therein, that the Almighty is the Creator of both good and evil for our benefit, he almost takes one's breath away by saying, "*Our blessed Lord was a Jew, He was not a Christian; neither are His doctrines the foundations of Christianity, as many superficial critics seem to imagine.*" And to show that the apostles had the same power to teach what they concluded was right and true, although different to our Saviour's teaching, he says: "*This is the reason of the altered teaching, and here is the authority for what they did. They had received the promise of the Father, even the Holy Spirit, and were clothed with power and authority from on high. The apostles were inspired men,*

and could not in their '*ex cathedrâ*' teaching err. Individually, in private life they did as St. Paul acknowledges, and St. Peter is reported to have done." Again he says: "Our blessed Lord, when on earth, before His crucifixion, was a Jew who came to fulfil the law. After His crucifixion a new state of things commenced. St. Paul was inspired by the Spirit of Christ, and could write and teach nothing derogatory to Christ. St. Paul was Christ's apostle, and his epistles are to be received as the words of Christ"!! So that he frankly admits that St. Paul, inspired by the Spirit of Christ, altered our Saviour's teaching, and that it is this altered teaching which now passes for Christianity. No more mischievously pernicious theory than this could well be imagined, setting at nought, as it does, the caution that false Christs would arise, who were not to be followed.

Thus the example and teaching of St. Paul, which stand out sometimes in such strong contrast to our Saviour's example and teaching, are not endeavoured to be reconciled with His; but St. Paul's teaching is received and our Saviour's teaching is ignored, and the confusion and the dissension arising therefrom are increased by the presumption of bishops, priests, and ministers claiming to have the same Holy Spirit in them, and that in what they say and do, consequently, *ex cathedrâ*, they cannot err. Thus predestination, election, reprobation, celibacy, total abstinence, asceticism, and all sorts of Pharisaisms and paganisms, crosses and holy water, incense and vestments, altars and candles, Swedenborgianisms, Plymouth Brethrenisms, and a hundred other "isms," so divide and distract the multitude that any unity or agreement is hopeless; and our Saviour's records are so mixed up with the Pharisaical subtleties of

St. Paul and the teaching of all sorts proceeding from other sources as to be lost or buried beyond the possibility of perception by the multitude. These same Pharisaical subtleties being ignored, if not specially condemned by our Saviour, no wonder that St. Peter records that St. Paul had written some things hard to be understood. If he had been brought up in the same school he would have understood them readily enough ; but his violence of temper did as great, or even a greater injury to Christianity.

That the issues of accepting the teaching of the Scriptures and of the Apocrypha, of the old Jewish Rabbis, and of our Saviour, *that the Almighty is the Creator of both good and evil for our benefit*, are, as he describes, stupendous ones, there can be no doubt, as will be seen hereafter, especially releasing the multitude from the power of priests and ministers to keep them in ignorance and deadly fear, and filling it with light and love to Him, instead of darkness and hatred of one another.

That the issues are tremendous, so far as the teaching of the great majority of the clergy of all denominations are concerned on the one side, and so far as the increased light which the multitude will obtain by believing it on the other, there can be no doubt ; but it will not increase the widespread of infidelity, resulting from the ways and want of light of the priests and ministers, and their disobedience to our Lord's commands, their ritualism and idolatry and Church millinery, their good temperism and hypocrisy and asceticism, their long prayers and regular prayer-meetings and regular fastings. And true religion and kindness will certainly not be less than they are at present by the knowledge that there is but one God.

Of what use was all our Saviour's earnest teaching—of what use was all His miracles to attest its truthfulness—if that which He taught was not the foundation of Christianity, and if He were not a Christian? Subtlety and sophistry can go no further than this to overthrow His teaching by making St. Paul's the most conspicuous. Nor is it to be conceived that our Lord should have corrected Moses' teaching in minor things, and that He should have left uncondemned such passages in the inspired Word as, "I create the evil," of much more serious import, or that He should have used the Apocrypha and approved of matter, that ministers of Churches, on their own authority, might denounce it. It is this self-constituted opinion that has made the epistles of St. Paul, written from fifty-four to sixty-six years after His crucifixion, supersede our Saviour's teaching. .

Worse than all is it that writings with which He had no acquaintance, written so many years after His death, should have been able thus to overwhelm His teaching, and that the example of one of the most energetic and active of ascetics should have destroyed the teaching of a very different kind.

The result of believing those portions of Scripture proclaiming the Almighty to be the Creator of evil and good of both kinds, without any limit, will be that there will be less self-righteousness and fewer long, powerful prayers and long, powerful sermons, which the prophets denounced as wind, because there were no good results from them; but the sick will be healed, and there will be testimonies of joy and rejoicing of such a character that there will be little doubt of the result, or that those born again will become

in time like little children, instead of fierce old men ; and peace and happiness and prosperity will reign, instead of religious strife and hypocrisy and wretchedness and misery, and theatres will be but poorly attended, and vice and ignorance will be pitied and mercifully corrected. The mischievously pernicious theory that our Saviour was in St. Paul, and that St. Paul's epistles are to be received as the words of Christ, will be abandoned, and these epistles be received only for what they are worth, when tried by His words, who is the Judge of all men.

Do the fathers and mothers of England indeed know that our Saviour was not a Christian ? Do they indeed know that His doctrines are not the foundations of Christianity ? There are, there is no doubt, large numbers who care for none of these things, so that they are relieved of the duty of instructing their children ; they are content with whatever the good men who are in authority may teach them, of whatsoever kind or character it may be, and know no more of the difference that there is between the teaching of St. Paul and the teaching and example of our Saviour than do the poor of the lowest class, who have never received so much education as to be able to read the Scriptures. Do the fathers and mothers who send their sons to the universities and to the great schools of England indeed know the result of their expenditure, and that if they escape the dissipations and excesses of college life, sometimes heard of, they fall into something worse ? that is, if their sophistries and subtleties may be so considered, by which the conclusion is arrived at that our Saviour was not a Christian ; that His doctrines are not the foundations of Christianity ; and, by

inference, that St. Paul's epistles and the epistles of the other apostles show the strait and the narrow way that our Saviour's life and precepts have, it seems, failed to do. Nor does the difference appear to be realized, notwithstanding the startling contrasts between them.

When our Saviour wept over Jerusalem He, not only wept over the Scribes and the Pharisees, or the priests and ministers, and the multitude they swayed, but He wept over all those they represented, who, coming after them, would do worse than they did ; who would, not only assign the creation of evil to the devil, and blaspheme His Holy Spirit, and persecute and torture and put to death millions upon millions of those who resisted them, and cast them out, but would absolutely do these things in His name, and, prostituting His sacrifice and His table ; ignore His gentleness, His humility, His loving-kindness, His tender mercy, and His long-suffering ; and, whilst as fierce and determined to do good and to resist evil, as only evil spirits and hypocrites can be, call themselves converted men and priests and ministers of His. No one who reads the history of so-called Christianity but must admit that more terrible records of all kinds have never existed, or that a heavier blight could fall upon the progress of intelligence, of charity, of faith, of hope, and of all that could add to the happiness and the elevation of mankind, or that a more resolute determination to make people good in their own way, or to act in direct opposition to His example and teaching, could well have been manifested, continued even to the present day, so far as the law will allow them to act independently ; as if the exhibition of a greater good than had ever before been taught should have had the effect of

giving life to greater evils than had ever before been known, out of the perversity and conceit and pride that seem natural to the humanity of priests and ministers and so-called converted men, accompanied by such self-confidence and self-righteousness, or self-holiness, as only priests and ministers and so-called converted men could exhibit.

For priests and ministers to denounce and take active measures against evil, or sin, or wickedness is certainly to increase it ; everything of that kind must be corrected by the law and the magistrate or the judge.

He does not allow priests and ministers and converted men to interfere with His work, as His thoughts are not their thoughts, neither are their ways His ways ; for God who has created both the evil and the good has ordained that there must ever be evil before the good so long as the world lasts.

Nothing can well be more opposed to each other than our Saviour's example and precepts to His apostles and St. Paul's example and his directions to Timothy and Titus. Our Saviour studiously avoided publicity, and told those that followed Him that they should not be heard for their much praying, but that whatever any two agreed to ask for should be done for them ; whilst St. Paul was publicity itself, and he urges those he teaches to pray without ceasing, without any agreement beforehand whatever.

Our Saviour saw long prayers and prayer-meetings only to condemn them ; St. Paul saw, and may, indeed, have attended, prayer-meetings and made long prayers, and gives no express condemnation of them at all.

St. Paul urges Timothy to reprove, rebuke, and exhort "in season, out of season" ; our Saviour only told His

apostles to teach all nations—and this would include much besides Scriptural teaching—and to baptize believers with the knowledge of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Our Saviour made the laying of hands on the sick and afflicted the great test of those He sent forth; St. Paul sent his disciples forth by laying of hands upon healthy, vigorous men, some of whom did not know if there were any Holy Ghost or not, who required rather to have some of the spirit in them taken away than to have it added to. And the same remark holds good still, and shows that it is only an abuse of the spirit to add to it *in that way*.

St. Paul appears to have seen, as St. John did, even in his time, the evils proceeding from such a ministry as he and the other apostles had sent forth; although he did not understand that the laying on of hands on healthy instead of sick men, and the want of faith thereby manifested by them, was, in truth, the first cause of it; but he prophesied truly that the great evils which he then observed, and which he called the mystery of iniquity, should cease in time, and that the Lord would destroy it “with the breath of His mouth, and with the brightness of His coming.”

But St. Paul did not appear to be able to see that the Lord did not want his assistance to make ministers or preachers, and his earnestness and his energy induced him to expect that by *his* activity and by what *he* could do the Gospel of the good news of salvation to all men through Christ would be more quickly and effectually spread abroad in the world; whilst nothing, perhaps, has more tended to make hypocrites and to destroy our Saviour's example and precepts and the good news of salvation to all men than have St. Paul's writings. He never realized that he or those

he taught were to "*be still, and know that I am God,*" and that, whilst his commission was to carry this good news abroad, and to teach after the example of our Saviour, adding to it the mystery of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, his commission went no further.

That condemning and casting out and putting away of others which our Saviour cautioned against, he was especially prone to ; and his followers have been without number, and their righteousness in this respect without measure.

Nothing could well have tended to injure, if not to destroy, our Saviour's example and teaching than that St. Paul's epistles should have been received into the canon of the Scriptures. The persons who formed the Council of Nice, and who selected them from a great quantity of other writings—some represented to be his, and some of others called saints—were, says Tyndale, a body of drunken bishops, who, at their meetings, came to blows. He says : "They fell foul of each other, and one of their number was mortally wounded." Another writer states that they were abandoned to every species of immorality and addicted to the most abominable crimes : few could write their names. This Council of Nice was held in 325, and it was sixty years after this that these epistles were declared canonical.

St. Paul's doctrines of election, predestination, and reprobation have caused terrible divisions. How utterly opposed they are to our Saviour's teaching may be understood from an extract of one of the leading lights of a Church that still makes them a part of its belief. After five chapters of matter he thus sums up :—

"The sum of all is this. One in twenty of mankind is

elected, nineteen in twenty are reprobated. The elect shall be saved, do what they will ; the reprobated shall be damned, do what they can. Reader, believe this, or be damned.

“ Witness my hand,

“ AUGUSTUS TOPLADY.”

But with this may be placed a hymn not now, it is to be hoped, in use by any, but formerly held in much estimation by another body calling themselves Christian, having these lines in it :—

“ For hell is crammed
With infants damned,
Without a day of grace.”

This was to enforce the necessity for the baptismal regeneration of infants ; and many a poor mother, whose child died without infant baptism, has suffered great distress of mind from believing this outrageous doctrine.

The five chapters on predestination are of the same preposterous character. In one of them he says: “ We assert that the number of the elect, and also of the reprobate, is so fixed and determined that neither can be augmented or diminished.” And there are other *assertions* that cannot be reconciled with any portion of our Saviour’s teaching.

The fruit of such teaching in this and in other Churches proclaims their character. Idolaters have never slaughtered idolaters because of their idolatry ; but there is no denomination of Christians, perhaps, that has not slaughtered Christians because of their Christianity, excepting, of course, those denominations that have sprung up since the common law has protected life from the fanaticism and the intolerance and the cruelty and the superstition of so-called Christians, but really of the followers of St. Peter and

St. Paul ; so that these can take no credit for their forbearance except the credit that the Scribes and Pharisees took, and brought down upon themselves the heavier condemnation in consequence.

That the shameful moral condition of the great cities and towns, and the superstitions and ignorance and want of intelligence in the country districts, of Great Britain and Ireland, and other so-called Christian countries, may be ascribed to the evil and erroneous spiritual teaching and the idolatrous practices of priests and ministers there can be no doubt. As the healthy moral condition of the multitude depends upon their healthy spiritual condition, the disorders of the one will necessarily be the result of the disorders of the other, the law only keeping congregations in peace with one another, and thus being, indeed, "the tree of life." St. Paul was quite right in saying that the law is the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, the misfortune being that in this his teaching is not recognized, and that priests and ministers act as if they were the schoolmasters, and not that the law was.

St. Paul told the early Christians, "Be ye followers of me," believing that he was a follower of our Saviour ; and oddly enough the great bulk of what was and what still is called Christianity followed St. Peter, and the successors of "the fisherman" ruled the world for ages. The example St. Peter set brought forth much fruit, and Ananias and Sapphira were only the precursors of millions upon millions whom holy men, filled, as they believed, with the Holy Spirit, gave over to death, and tortures and racks and every ingenuity of cruelty were justified thereby, that this so-called Christianity might be established and prevail over

all the earth and all dissent from such teachers be destroyed, but especially God's chosen people, the Jews. So in like manner large bodies of Christians have followed St. Paul, and in his way have gone quite as far from the strait and narrow way pointed out by our Saviour, and even to as great extremes.

It is stated by the author of "Leisure Hours in Town" that at one time, in Scotland, it was esteemed as proof that a clergyman preached unsound doctrines if he made use of the Lord's Prayer! St. Paul cannot be charged with errors of this description; but there is but a step from the sublime to the ridiculous. It is a step, however, that makes all the difference: and so, in like manner, there is but a step from our Saviour to St. Paul; but that step alters His teaching completely.

It was this that our Saviour appears to have foreseen when He was so impressive in observing that His sheep would know His voice, and that the voice of another they would not follow. It was this that made the voice from heaven necessary, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him."

St. James, in his beautiful epistle, is at variance with our Saviour, declaring that no man must say, when he is tempted, that he is tempted of God, for our Saviour, in His prayer, teaches us to pray, Our Father, lead us not into temptation. If this were a light matter it might pass with little notice; but, unfortunately, it is a great matter, although St. James is careful to state that everyone is tempted of his own lusts, that have been born in him.

St. Paul declares that eventually "all will be saved," but our Saviour declares that the wicked will perish, whilst

Scribes and Pharisees, or priests and ministers and so-called converted men, declare that the wicked will be cast into hell fire and torment for ever after death. As it is difficult to reconcile such important declarations with each other, it may be as well to recollect that there are many less important declarations of priests and ministers, as well as of St. Paul, that do not coincide with our Saviour's teaching.

All our Saviour's teaching and example tend to correct an excess of what is now called religion and religious display : this was also the course pursued by Isaiah and Jeremiah and other prophets. One denounces the continuous correction and condemnation of the people by the priests (Isaiah i.) ; another, their long sermons, which he calls wind ; and another, *by the Word of the Lord*, changes all their fastings into cheerful feastings.

The love that our Saviour manifested towards the multitude was a very different description of love to that He described as wool, that He pointed out as especially noticeable in the Scribes and Pharisees, or the priests and ministers, on the one hand, nor did He ever display that sort of power which made it dangerous to come near them on the other.

Temporal evil is designed to bring people to repentance, and through repentance to spiritual life ; otherwise, those who will not repent perish. The spiritual evils that our Saviour condemned as being worse than temporal evils are the ways that people who have obtained spiritual life take to preach against and to destroy temporal evil, which is born with everyone for God's wise purposes, and is common to all men, believing that they can see now what they will only be able to see hereafter, not believing in

God and His wisdom and His ways, and believing that they can improve upon His work, with the result that they ever increase the evil by producing something worse than that which they have laboured against. Hence the command, "Be still, and know that I am God."

This is that blasphemy condemned with such an awful condemnation by our Saviour.

Spiritual men, in their wickedness of unbelief, imagine that a wicked spirit could destroy evil or cast out evil spirits. Our Saviour's kindly and affectionate words at His last supper, recommending His disciples rather to fall into the soil themselves and die, so far as spiritual things were concerned, are not believed, and are misconstrued. St. Paul's ways were of this character, and no doubt he reproved and rebuked and exhorted "in season, out of season," and his words are remembered and acted on by all such people, whilst our Saviour's words are neglected and forgotten.

Spiritual men, or Scribes and Pharisees, or priests and ministers and converted men, should look around them and see who those are that will claim to have cast out devils in His name, and in His name done many wonderful works, whom He will condemn and declare that He never knew.

His strait and narrow way, avoiding errors on the right hand as well as on the left, was not noticed. Those who called themselves His followers appear to have made open war upon the paganism they conceived was all opposed to Christianity, whilst practising that which was its certain destruction.

St. Paul told the people to make themselves living sacrifices, which would include the sad faces that such

people cannot avoid, and to whom the merry heart and the cheerful countenance are an abomination.

There are two different descriptions of evil—moral evil and spiritual evil. Our Saviour always fought against spiritual evil, and did not resist moral evil. He honoured married people, ate and drank with Publicans and sinners of the very same things that they ate and drank of, and only told people, *when they fasted*, to do it so secretly that they should appear as if they feasted.

To follow both our Saviour and St. Paul is impossible, for St. Paul urges those extremes which for opposing and condemning our Saviour was crucified.

Our Saviour always recognizes His Father as the Creator of good and evil, and obeys the command, "Be still, and know that I am God." He gives few directions of a specific character to His disciples as to what they should teach others, rather as cautions against excesses and immorality, pointing otherwise to the Scriptures. "What is written? how readest thou?" St. Paul, on the other hand, is profuse in the extreme in his directions, not only to Timothy and Titus, but, in his other epistles, as to what their teaching must be. And, not only upon their teaching, but also as to those to be condemned and cast out; so that, although of itself there is much that appears praiseworthy in his directions, yet he evidently strays widely from the example of our Saviour in them.

Our Saviour was a teacher, and does not appear to have exercised anything like oratory or to have preached continually to the people. His sermon on the mount can scarcely be called preaching, as compared to the sermonizing, that St. Paul was, and those who may be called His dis-

ciples are so intent upon now, and which appears very often to invert Christianity, if Christianity is obedience to our Saviour's example and precepts. Such persons as have a great itch for preaching have always existed : the prophet of old calls it "wind." When our Saviour comes again the preaching that is thought so much of now will receive a great check, and it will not divide people in any way or be the cause of religious enmity and animosity and hatred and malice and all uncharitableness.

Our Saviour did not wish to destroy the Scribes and Pharisees, but rather told the people to support them by obeying them. All that He was desirous of was to correct practices and teaching of spiritual men that had an evil effect. The Scribes and Pharisees had much that was praiseworthy in them, which our Saviour recognized ; but their spiritual practices and ways were most deplorable in their results in themselves and upon the multitude. So in like manner it would be injurious to undervalue what St. Paul and others have written, otherwise than by a comparison of them with our Saviour.





CHAPTER VI.

Excesses are Spiritual Manures—Forgiveness of Sins—Christianity and Paganism Compared—Description by a Minister of the Punishment of Sinners—The Belief in the Devil and Hell Fire—Baxter's "Saints' Rest"—The Sower of Tares—Contrast of Dr. Watts with Pythagoras—The Spiritual Contest of Our Saviour—Excess of Religion to be Guarded against—Do Ministers' Sons now Cast Out Devils?—The Result of only being Half-instructed in the Scriptures—The End of the Old World and the Beginning of the New—Belief in the Devil and Faith in God—What the Destruction of the Belief in the Devil, &c., will Produce—Carlyle's Conclusion—Priests and Ministers should abandon all Power.

A GREAT charge against priests and ministers teaching is that of threatening the multitude of sinners with eternal torment in flames of fire, the most serious, perhaps, that will have to be replied to hereafter, accompanied, as it is, by desire for authority, and the certainty they feel that without establishing it in this way priests and ministers can be of but little service in the world, rendering it most unlikely that this teaching will ever be voluntarily abandoned or that it should be perceived that the only words used by our Saviour, out of which such a teaching could be maintained, applies to priests and ministers themselves only, or the class from which they are obtained, to whom it is seldom or ever applied now at all, and whose confidence in the sufficiency of our Saviour's sacrifice for the *life of the world* absolutely gives the assurance that they and all who

believe therein will escape punishment and correction hereafter ; whilst if ever anything was endeavoured to be impressed by Him more especially than another on priests and ministers, or Scribes and Pharisees, it was that the punishment their disobedience would receive would be the most severe and of the most protracted character. To invert this and apply it to the multitude implies, either great blindness and want of perception on the one hand, or blasphemy and duplicity of the worst character on the other.

The sins and errors and weaknesses and excesses of all kinds of the multitude are, like manures, very offensive things, and most destructive to happiness, where such matters ought not to be, but of great value where they are required. Their ultimate destruction is certain, but their usefulness requires faith in God, and not fear of the devil, to be perceived, or to persuade those who profess to be His ministers to be still ; their long garments and clean raiment of rich colours, their ritualism and great holiness, their pride and vanity of all kinds placing a great gulf between them and the multitude of an impassable character to them.

The great Husbandman only can use offensive matters effectually, just as we know husbandmen of the earth are those who know where and when and in what quantity manure is necessary. He commands His servants to keep themselves clean, and on no account to imagine that they can do good by promoting evil or using this manure themselves ; and, where He is using it, to be still, and know that He is God, whose ways are not as their ways, nor His thoughts as their thoughts.

He only gives repentance when asked for it earnestly. He offers for acceptance a sacrifice He has Himself prepared

for the lives of all, and He will surely correct with fire those, who call themselves His servants, who presumptuously interfere with His work, or who touch the offensive matters that He is pleased to work with; or who disobey His Word and use their own wisdom where His Word is plainly given for their guidance, showing a spirit of dissatisfaction with His work and His ways, when silent adoration and praise and thanksgiving and wonder might be received and acknowledged and held in remembrance for them, instead of that punishment and correction which He ordained of old. And it is an everlasting law. When His long-suffering fails, He becomes angry with such servants, cutting down the *trees* that, notwithstanding the digging and the manure that He has thought necessary, still continue to bear forth no fruit, and are only covered with deceptive leaves.

Our Saviour, not only knew evil from good, in its temporal aspect, more perfectly than we can, but He knew it also in its spiritual one; a more difficult knowledge to attain to, and one that is now utterly misunderstood. It is upon the spiritual evil of doing good in the way so highly esteemed by Scribes and Pharisees, or priests and ministers and so-called converted men, but held in abomination by the Almighty, that He made the heaviest denunciations and gave the most urgent cautions to His disciples.

As to the power of forgiving sins without hearing any confessions, which He was pleased to confer on His disciples, where He has conferred it, He has also given power of discernment that they may truly perceive where forgiveness may be pronounced in accordance with His will. The presumptuous assumption of this power by those who in these days claim and exercise it proclaims the blind

leading the blind, with its assured results. Although they may be deceived, and deceive others, God is not mocked. Those who hear confessions and forgive and they who receive such forgivenesses partake of the same things, and cannot impose upon Him, who will visit such people with that "swift destruction" which is prophesied against them.

Tertullian, speaking to Pope Zephyrinus said: "Show me now prophetic proofs, and I will recognize your divine rights and vindicate to *yourself* the power of forgiving sins. . . . Who or how great are you that you should pardon? who, by exhibiting neither the prophetic nor the apostolic character, do not possess that virtue whose right is to pardon." The author of "Sacerdotalism, Ancient and Modern," says: "Absolution is a solemn farce, if looked at from one point of view, and a gross imposition, if looked at from another. Ancient priestcraft seized, corrupted, and blighted the body; modern priestcraft seizes the soul and crushes it with a far more irresistible despotism."

The "Priest in Absolution," published in our own day, and the tariff of charges, published before now by Roman Catholicism, not so much for absolution as for permission to perpetrate all sorts of crimes and from the least to the greatest sins and wickednesses, are sufficient testimony of the vile condition of those Churches and of the condition of the multitude.

So far as the world has been cultivated by Christian priests and ministers of all denominations, with worthy exceptions, it contrasts unfavourably in its results with paganism, as regards charity to one another and towards the multitude. For the greater general intelligence, scientific attainments, manufactures, discoveries, and other evidences

of progress, the world is indebted to those who have in some instances been condemned to death and persecuted, if allowed to live, by the priesthood and ministers wherever power to effect this has been held ; and where such power has been taken away, those who are accounted benefactors to the multitude have certainly not been of the priesthood or ministry, with those exceptional cases that are said ever to prove the rule.

The Lord in His blessed and Holy Word teaches the people to gather their manna each for himself on *six* days of the week, in the morning before the sun waxes hot, making the weak strong and the strong mighty ; priests and ministers teach the people to gather it at various times, chiefly in the evening, and especially on Sundays and holy days and Wednesday evenings, and it becomes offensive to the multitude, or, as His Word threatens, "it stinks, and breeds worms," making the strong weak, through sheer disgust at the hypocrisy they see, and destroying the weak altogether.

The highest spiritual attainment is humility and obedience. The ways of priests and ministers will ever tend to make men spiritually proud and high-minded and confident and satisfied with their own righteousness and goodness and disobedience. His example and cautions, if observed, will ever make people meek and lowly and obedient and satisfied only with the righteousness and goodness that have been provided for them in Christ, and which, in His own good time, He will put upon them.

Verily, verily such priests and such ministers, blaspheming, as they but too often do, will have their reward ; and when the time comes for spiritual punishments and corrections

the surprise and astonishment will be great of those to whom they will be awarded.

The great Husbandman will eventually destroy all offensive matters or manures, and He will remove all the dross from those poor, waiting, humble ones who speak often one to another of Him ; and He will remember those who have blasphemed Him, by assigning to Him a tyrannical and cruel character, and who have on this foundation built themselves up and lifted themselves on high above the multitude, refusing His guidance and becoming wind ; whereby that which should have been for their lives and His service has either divided the multitude into sections or driven them away into unbelief and infidelity.

Our Saviour taught this lesson in the barren fig tree or the self-righteous Pharisee, with his long clothing, his long prayers, and prayer-meetings where he might be heard of men. This whited sepulchre was to be dug about and *manured* before any hope of fruit could be looked for from him, or anything better than withering leaves proceed from him.

We know that manure loses its offensiveness when buried in the earth, that it is destroyed and disappears, and is resolved into that inert mass out of which it originally came, or into better things. And so with sins and excesses and errors and weaknesses, their destruction is certain with their offensiveness ; and as there liveth not the man that doeth good and sinneth not, all may anticipate a better existence of some sort hereafter, free from the sins and errors and excesses and weaknesses they suffered from here. The teaching of priests and ministers cuts off this hope and consigns poor, weak persons, whose excesses are

offensive, to an eternity of torment and suffering hereafter the most vivid and frightful that their imaginations could invent—described by a minister, who seems to aspire to eminence in blasphemy, as “*the greatest an Almighty God can inflict, or the sinner be able to suffer.*” This very good man, who remembers his Master’s words and His guidance so well, may have time to reflect on this description after the judgment, if not before.

The day cannot be far off when belief in the devil and hell fire and torment for ever will be found only with heathens and pagans, and the mythology to which Christianity is so much indebted will be no longer taught to the sons of prophets.

He who believes in the devil will dream of the devil, and nothing will more tend to confirm him in the belief of such an existence. Nor is it fair to expect more knowledge of spiritual things from such a person than is possessed by those people who make no claim to be called Christians.

Our Saviour’s declaration, on the contrary, is that all sins and excesses and errors that the multitude may commit, and blasphemies with which they may blaspheme, shall be forgiven *them*; but that the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost by priests and ministers shall not be forgiven, neither in this world, neither in the world to come, declaring that wicked or inhuman people perish.

This should have restrained priests and ministers and so-called holy men of all sorts from shameful and horrible blasphemies; for so long as the world lasts, and men and women are its inhabitants, so long will sin and excesses and errors be used amongst them; and priests and ministers and so-called converted men would appear to be the only

persons to whom the terrible condemnation of our Saviour will apply—that they should never have forgiveness. He will, in His own good time, show His faithfulness, and Christ's teachers will ever find work to do. Just and true are His ways in all ages, and under every dispensation, however incomprehensible to us.

So thoroughly have priests and ministers and the multitude been trained, in their childhood, in the faith that "the devil" is the creator of evil, and so completely has the teaching been accepted by all denominations, that people's minds appear to be bewildered and unable to receive this great first lesson of the Scriptures, that the Almighty is the Creator of both evil and good of all kinds, without limit, for our benefit. It is argued by many that there is now but little belief in the devil and hell fire and torment for ever for sinners. An extract from a very religious book in great esteem with godly people may serve to show the contrary. Baxter, in his "Saints' Rest," page 101, says: "The everlasting flames of hell will not be thought too hot for the rebellious, and when they have there burned through millions of ages He will not repent Him of the evil which is befallen them." And again at page 104: "But the greatest aggravation of their torments will be their eternity. When a thousand millions of ages are past they are as fresh to begin as at the first day." And he goes into most lively and animated descriptions and pictures of miseries and tortures and exclamations of remorse, as if he really delighted to revel and exercise his imagination in this way, and as if he believed the *rest* of those he looked upon as saints would principally consist in contemplating this terrible condition of things established for the punish-

ment of those who did not live as they did, and believed as they believed, and would not submit to such good people and their ministers, but who would persist in the enjoyment of the things of this world with their wives and families. Indeed, the book teems with this terrible matter, and must, in its time, have wrought great injury to the minds of those who may have read it, filling them with such darkness that it is doubtful if any light could ever penetrate them. It would, no doubt, through absolute fear, have induced many to assist in driving as many sinners as possible into what they believed to be the strait and narrow way and to have made many hypocrites.

A popular writer thinks that our Saviour, if He came again now, would find faith abundant. This would not be supported by His words; but had he said that He would find abundant fear of the devil prevailing, he would have been nearer the truth.

What an utter difference it would make in the intercourse of humanity if instead of looking upon one whose conduct was bad, and calling him a child of the devil, he was looked upon as one of God's erring children, whose condition was as necessary in the world as was that of better people, but requiring correction and instruction to be brought to his knees for his own sake!

Fear of the devil as the creator of evil, as taught by priests and ministers, produced the dark ages, which through history may now be viewed with some interest by those who desire to see the abominably horrible results of such teaching. The light of later years has proceeded from those upon whom no hands have been laid, and who believe in nothing of the kind.

To call the Almighty "incomprehensible," and at the same time to assert that He cannot create evil, is a complete contradiction; and no man can be said to have faith in God who lives in fear of the devil, or who teaches that which produces it.

Our Saviour never condemns the manure that His Father uses, but assures poor, repentant sinners who are offended with their condition that all shall be forgiven them if they turn away from it, but that otherwise their houses will fall, and they may perish.

Imagine people calling themselves the servants of the Most High, whom they admit is supreme and the Creator and Incomprehensible, ascribing work of His, that they cannot understand to be His, to the power of a supreme evil being, whom they call the devil, as opposed to Him and always endeavouring to frustrate His work, and, consequently, to be hated; paganism, in fact, of the purest character preached and taught by Christian priests and ministers in great ignorance, as there cannot be two great Creators.

The enemy who sowed the tares was, not the devil, but an evil spirit, or a priest or minister, who wanted to enrich himself at the cost of his neighbour by what he sowed.

Would Dr. Watts' religion be preferred according to his poetry, as compared to that of Pythagoras, the pagan, and which is most in accordance with Christ's teaching, or Christianity? Dr. Watts says in his verse of hymn 42,—

" His nostrils breathe out fiery streams,
He's a consuming fire;
His jealous eyes His wrath inflame,
And raise His vengeance higher."

Pythagoras' verse is,—

“ Let not soft slumber close thine eyes
 Before thou recollectest thrice
 Thy train of actions through the day.
 Where have my feet found out their way ?
 What have I learnt, where'er I've been,
 From all I've heard, from all I've seen ?
 What know I more that's worth the knowing ?
 What have I sought that I should shun ?
 What duty have I left undone ?
 Or into what new follies run ?
 These self-inquiries are the road
 That leads to virtue and to God.”

Tried by the standard of our Saviour, whether does the Rev. Dr. Watts or the pagan Pythagoras resemble Him the more ?

It should always be remembered that when our Saviour commenced His ministry, and chose twelve disciples, He formed a party to oppose Caiaphas, the high priest, or the devil, and his children the Scribes and Pharisees, or the priests and the ministers and so-called converted men. Both parties had the testimony of the Spirit, but our Saviour had only the gift of the Holy Ghost ; and the contest as recorded in the New Testament was the most important one that has ever been entered into upon earth : *it was a spiritual contest.*

There is no contest recorded that our Saviour had with any person who did not show that He had received spiritual life. “All the common people heard Him gladly” ; the blind man defended Him, and was cast out of the Church. The great qualification for the Jewish Sanhedrim was the testimony : no such assembly has ever sustained

itself as this great assembly did, or maintained an existence with materials so chosen. The Jewish priesthood who crucified our Saviour were the greatest and the holiest that the world had ever seen : they not only had the testimony—they were the trusty custodians of God's holy Word also.

Alexander the Great saw in a vision one, clad in great splendour, who promised him the victories and successes that would appear to have carried him forward to them ; and on his coming before Jerusalem he recognized the high priest to be he whom he had seen. He consequently protected Judæa, and would not exact any tribute from it.

It was in their capacity as lawyers, as well as in their capacity as priests and ministers, that our Saviour's denunciations upon them were made ; but to what extent that may exclude priests and ministers from them now must be for those who think themselves competent judges in such matters to determine.

No men were ever more highly respected as a body than the Scribes and the Pharisees were. Notwithstanding the charges made against them by our Saviour, they never had any weight with the people, who seldom know, or care to know, more than appears on the surface ; their long and rich raiment, their religious profession, and their solemnity as appropriate to the office of the priesthood always commanded obedience and respect from the multitude. Miracles were certainly wrought by their sons, and this appears to have been the cause why those wrought by our Saviour obtained Him so little credit with them. They would have had conciliatory manners and great show of love or charity and care for the spiritual welfare of the people, as sincerely

so perhaps as at present, especially as all holy men make a frightful retributory punishment after death for wicked people, as the pagans did a part of their teaching.

There is scarcely any distinction between the religion of Rome under the popes and absolute paganism. One of our most eminent historians says, "*Christianity had then relapsed into the semblance of paganism.*" The great difference was that, instead of the images of Jupiter and the other gods and goddesses which adorned their temples, the images that were then bowed down to (many of them the same) were then called the Father, or the Son, or the Virgin, or by the name of some saint.

The difference can best be understood by the record of what our Saviour condemned the Scribes and Pharisees for, and of that which is represented to have taken place between our Saviour and them from time to time.

The contest between them was upon belief in Satan, or the devil, or a great creator of evil, and great abstinence and show of righteousness and spiritual pride on the one side, as opposed to faith in God, temperance, and humility on the other. It is incomprehensible to us how the contest could have ended as it did, but it has ever terminated in the same way; and it would appear that only the grave or Christ's coming again can terminate it otherwise.

St. John calls this great fight, in his Revelations, "war in heaven," or the Church. Michael and his angels fought with the devil and his angels, or our Saviour and His disciples fought with Caiaphas and the Scribes and Pharisees. Those who enlist on Christ's side must be satisfied to fight as He fought, and with the same success.

Christ acknowledges no lukewarm soldiers. They who

fight with Him or on His side need not be troubled at those who think them mad ; it is a much better testimony than lukewarmness. There are evil spirits, or priests and ministers and so-called converted men, in abundance, over whom they have no power. They must be patient. Evil spirits in priests have had only power at any time to kill the body : that power is now taken away from them in most countries. And the time is not far off when it will be completely extinguished, however much they may persecute and oppose His soldiers otherwise.

Obtaining spiritual life is no guarantee that the errors into which such a ministry may lead the multitude will not be of a graver character than if they had obtained no spiritual life at all.

Unreasoning obedience to our Saviour's precepts and example and close attention to His denunciations upon prayer-meetings and Pharisaisms of all kinds, as being of a more deplorable character, and as bringing men into a more wretched spiritual condition than the drunkard and the harlot would eventually be in, are most essential. The excess of open displays of religion is the worst of all excesses ; but in secret, and absolutely by one's self, there is no excess to be afraid of. The seventh day is the Sabbath only ; any other day established to be kept holy tends to overthrow it : thus saints' days and holy days and fast days have destroyed the Sabbath in many so-called Christian lands, and horseraces and theatres and amusements of all kinds take its place ; and prayer-meetings and Wednesday evenings and holy times are rapidly bringing about a worse result in England, and the fairest promise, like Adam's cultivation, brings forth only thistles and thorns.

God can raise up children from the stones of the street and knows all things. This excess of open display, both in and out of the synagogue, has been the greatest curse to the world, its salvation, temporally and spiritually, having always sprung from the multitude; and the laity now can only be looked to, to establish a Church free from the spiritual dangers that it is surrounded by on all sides; that is, from the same description of evil spirits that St. John perceived so many of had gone abroad into the world even in his day.

If a house is built on bad foundations it is in danger of falling; but "if the foundations be removed, what can the righteous do?" for the house *must* fall; and priests and ministers have removed the foundations on all sides, and substituted saints' days and days for fasting and crosses and relics and Church millinery and confessions and prayer-meetings and long prayers and total abstinence and Puritanism and ministers' righteousness for the righteousness of God, and His righteousness as the Creator of good and evil is a stumbling-block and a rock of offence to them. Nor can they believe in it in any way.

Priests and ministers have taught people to look to them, and to believe in God through them, and He will teach them a lesson that they will not forget, for misrepresenting Him to insure their own importance; and they will find that the day of the Lord is darkness, and not light to them, whatever it may be to His poor people. Priests and ministers are quite confident that the evil they see about them of all kinds in the world is the work of the devil, and that they are fighting against it and resisting it in the way that our Saviour instructed them to fight

proclaiming, at the same time, that their ways are the Lord's ways, and their thoughts His thoughts.

Priests and ministers continually denounce transgressors, and resist evil, and fight against it, and confess and forgive sinners, and forget that He has planted a still small voice in everyone, and that their denunciations and fights and confessions and pardons are condemned by Him who has said (Isa. xliii. 25), "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions *for Mine own sake*, and will not remember thy sins"; and that our Saviour has declared (Matthew xii. 31), "Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto *men*: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost" by priests and ministers "shall not be forgiven . . . neither in this world, neither in the world to come," forgetting that only priests and ministers can be guilty of blasphemy against His power, of whom St. John declared, "For Thy pleasure" we "are and were created."

Our Saviour said of the Scribes and Pharisees that their sons cast out devils or evil spirits. What do priests and ministers' sons do now? When the Scribes and Pharisees of our Saviour's day rise up in the judgment they will most certainly receive more favour than priests and ministers now will, for they acted faithfully according to their traditions; but priests and ministers have adulterated God's holy Word, and continually called Him Lord whose teaching they refused to be guided by, without reflecting on the good and evil in all creation or considering that by incorrect statements or through ignorance, as much as through wilful falsehoods, they may so misrepresent Him as to throw all His spiritual work into division and disorder

and confusion, and do infinite injury to souls ; when by a little reflection and patient investigation of His word they would be able to teach those who are in darkness and to bring them into His light and His truth, instead of driving them into hopeless darkness and despair and infidelity and wretchedness.

This is just the result that would take place if some half-instructed mechanist were to attempt to take some beautiful piece of machinery in hand, to work it, requiring nice adjustment as well as skill and intelligence in its use ; the machinery would surely be rendered by him useless and dangerous, and the loss would be proportionate to the importance of the work it was intended to perform. Thus a pagan Pharisaism, with its belief in *the devil* as the creator of evil, its long prayers, its abstinence, its uncharitableness, its professed purity, and its loss of faith, has been developed on the one hand, or those endeavoured to be taught have gone off into utter Sadducism or infidelity on the other ; and the want of faith foreseen by our Saviour has resulted on all sides. However much the Scribes and Pharisees, or the priests and ministers and converted men, may blaspheme and rage about it, evil and good will ever progress together, as they are absolutely necessary to each other ; and the great blasphemy against God, who is incomprehensible, will ever only add to the evil by continuing the multitude in ignorance and by keeping priests and ministers in that authority and power they are so sure they will not abuse, and which they are so confident that they will only use for the good of their fellow creatures. But it is the multitude that must be still, and know the God and the devil that they believe in, and be under their

direction. They can never believe that chief places are not for them ; that they must serve God, the Incomprehensible, as secretly as possible, and leave all fighting of evil to those whom He appoints to that work, the judge and the magistrate and the sheriff and the police, and the laws to the lawyers.

The change that would take place from the general acknowledgment that God is the Creator of both evil and good for our benefit, and that to teach that *the devil* is the creator of evil for our destruction is blasphemy, would be equivalent to the end of the old world and the beginning of the new one, or the end of an old dispensation and the beginning of a new one, so great and so complete is the difference between the two beliefs or religions. But what many preachers will do without the devil and hell fire and torment for ever, it is somewhat difficult to imagine.

The belief in the devil as the creator of evil, and as the cause of that evil which must be within every man before any good can be said to be in him, is necessarily fatal to the possibility of any holder of it having "faith in God," as One who is incomprehensible, and who has incomprehensibly created us with stronger desires towards that which is evil than towards that which is good, doing a wondrous work in us in His own way and for His own wise purposes. Indeed, some of the preaching of the present day, instead of being only wind, as Isaiah and Jeremiah term it, can only be called a tirade of blasphemies, resembling those of the Scribes and Pharisees, upon the presumption that the devil is the creator of evil, and to be hated, and that God is the Creator of good, and to be loved. Nor is it likely that those

who fill their seats now will be persuaded to the contrary. But as the Scribes and Pharisees of old did worse even than their fathers did, so many of those who fill their seats now would do worse than those did who crucified our Saviour, if they were without any restraints of the law, even as the records of only a few centuries prove but too conclusively.

Belief in the devil and "faith in God" are so utterly inconsistent with each other that the trial to the understanding would appear in most cases to have unfortunate results, when the mind is so exercised in this particular way as to be able to enter upon the speculation at all. And that this is so no one who is acquainted with the condition of the ministry of all denominations generally, and of that of Italy in particular, can fail to deplore. Nor need we inquire into the deplorable effects of this teaching upon those who may be called the sons of the prophets, especially educated to continue the ministry of the Church of England, *to cure souls*, and generally to establish the teaching and work of Him who appears to have had especially in view the destruction of such a belief, although the use of words now obsolete and the abuses of the interpretation of the Scriptures would give a different impression sometimes to the mere reader of the gospels, from which has sprung that dangerous infidelity amongst the sons of the prophets and educated persons, many of whom abandon what is offered as religion altogether, especially on the Continent.

To destroy this belief is to release the mind from that which causes darkness and to give it light. It is to promote peace. It is to help to turn swords into ploughshares and spears into pruning-hooks. It is to plant humanity into human beings. It is to cast *the devil* into the bottomless

pit of forgetfulness. It is to increase learning. It is to clothe the poor. It is to make people temperate. It is to teach Christ, so that Christ may be understood. It is to gather all *Christians* into one body and to destroy all other denominations. It is to increase the growth of law and order and of the tree of life. It is to take away all fear of death. It is to erase *the devil* from all hymn-books and prayer-books. It is to give "faith in God" to everyone.

It will show everyone that the temptations and evils of all kinds by which they are surrounded are absolutely necessary for their condition as human beings, to make them intelligent and progressive, self-reliant and independent.

It will protect everyone from the pretensions of priests and ministers to be able to guide and direct others, and by confessions and penances, or by total abstinences and asceticism, or by any prescribed course, to give them repentance, to save them from the evil, and to make them good.

It will reduce priests and ministers to the simple performance, in all humility and with all reverence, of the duties of offering up public thanksgiving and praise for *all* things.

It will effectually take from priests and ministers all power over others.

It will destroy good temperarism amongst the multitude, by showing the absolute necessity, according to the Almighty's Word, of attaining to a cheerful and thankful, yet temperate, use of all lawful things.

It will destroy the hypocrisy and paganism that appertain to all public fastings and crosses and relics and altars and candles and holy waters, and all sorts of holy things,

and saints' days and long prayers and prayer-meetings and the pretensions of priests and ministers to make one another and all sorts of things holy and sacred.

It will make all know Him, from the least even to the greatest—not from the archbishop, or priest, or minister to the least, but from the least upwards who draw near to God, who will be sure to hear of His testimonies. Through the afflictions and the troubles and difficulties He will help *them*, and the prophecy of Jeremiah (xxxi. 34) will be realized, and the glorious promises which he was inspired to make will surely be fulfilled.

It will render it impossible for any priest or minister, or said to be converted or other man, to judge of the spiritual condition or destination hereafter of anyone.

It will enable everyone to laugh to scorn the assurance of there being salvation only to be found in this Church or that Church, or exclusively in any denomination of people whatever.

It will bring all those who are desirous of spiritual life to God's holy Word and to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and it will enable them to understand that which will otherwise be an inextricable labyrinth to them.

It will destroy blasphemy against God ; for as there is but a step from the sublime to the ridiculous, so there is but a step from acknowledging the almighty power of God and believing in a God of evil.

It will reconcile millions of intelligent men and women to English people who now believe them to be devils.

It will reconcile Doppers to the black races, whom they are now only too anxious to destroy.

It will reconcile all the various denominations of religious

people to one another, who now bear no good will to one another at all.

It will give light to the minds of men as to their Creator, and as to the character of that by which they are surrounded on all sides, such as nothing else can ever so effectually impart.

It will destroy blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. It will correct wicked priests and ministers and so-called converted men, who have by false representations deceived multitudes. Carlyle remarks: "As a priest or interpreter of the Holy is the noblest and highest of all men, so is a sham priest the falsest and basest. Neither is it doubtful that his canonicals, were they popes' tiaras, will one day be torn from him to make bandages for the wounds of mankind." Oh! those deadly wounds inflicted on the multitude by preaching *the devil* and hell fire and torment for ever by false interpreters, who know not that "spiritual music can spring only from discords set in harmony; that but for evil there were no good, as victory is only possible by battle. A vain, interminable controversy, touching what is at present called 'Origin of Evil,' or some such thing, arises in every soul since the beginning of the world, and in every soul that would pass from idle suffering into actual endeavouring *must first be put an end to.*"

This conclusion of Carlyle has, however, ever been frustrated by desire for authority and power, accompanied by an overwhelming confidence that the views and interpretations of priests and ministers and converted men are right, and that anyone to be saved from damnation must hold the same belief that they do; consequently that it is absolutely necessary in every respect that power and

authority to rule others should be given them, and that it would be quite inconsistent that anyone should be allowed to teach otherwise than as they taught.

The idea that the Almighty works without them and that they may be working against Him, and leading souls into darkness, or that such a thing is possible, is so absurd and ridiculous as not to be worthy of notice ; or that He should require them to be amongst others as "he that serves" without any feigned humility. They must be *servants of the Lord only*, and in former days all power was conceded willingly to them, and Christianity became a terrible curse on every land that submitted itself to the rule of the clergy, whose destroying energies and skill in tortures could only proceed from evil spirits, accompanied, as it too often was, by an utter absence of temperance, soberness, and chastity.

Where the power of life and death has been taken away from the clergy, and where the laws of the land protect everyone in absolute freedom as to his religious opinions, this rule applies only to individual Churches, supported by the various denominations of persons calling themselves Christians.

It is quite necessary that persons properly educated should be set aside or kept for the service of *the Church*. It is quite unnecessary that they should lay hands upon, and pretend to convey to, one another the power of the Holy Ghost and be guilty of blasphemy against this great spiritual power, thereby bringing themselves into the most lamentable spiritual condition that it is possible to conceive of, repeating again, if ever they obtain power, those evils upon the multitude of which, in the years that have

passed since the manifestation of our Saviour, there has been so much experience.

When all temporal power of any description is abandoned by priests and ministers, and even any desire for it suppressed, there will be manifestations of spiritual power such as our Saviour displayed when He became as "he that serves," and the healing of the sick by the laying on of hands will amply compensate for the loss of any imaginary benefit from the hands of others being laid upon them.

The building of conflicting places of worship side by side sometimes—out of love to God, of course, and not out of opposing religious opinions—may not proceed hereafter so vigorously; but regard to God's holy Word will increase and spread abroad all the more as the light of the evening, so long since promised, dissipates the darkness which priests and ministers are so bewildered in that every year different denominations of Christians spring up, each confident of having found the strait and the narrow way, and each yearly increasing the confusion that already exists.

So far as that which is absurd and ridiculous, nothing could well excel an instance when the minister of one denomination, preaching by permission in a place of worship belonging to that of another, edified the congregation by repeatedly entreating his hearers to make his God their God, both ministers and both congregations believing equally in the devil and hell fire and torment for ever.

Where the possibility of enforcing matters of religion or belief by the power of the law has been taken away, the ingenuity of man would necessarily be employed in devising means of his own in saving souls in his own particular way: more mischievous ones very often cannot well be imagined,

the importance of the subject requiring every servant of God to use his utmost endeavours indifferently and in every way to obtain so desirable and so laudable an end, which, of course, in their opinion could not be obtained were the priest or minister to be amongst others as "he that serves."

Thus Christianity has resolved itself into a Christian paganism on the one hand, or into a bastard Judaism, with its Scribes and Pharisees, on the other. Sir Isaac Newton, with his great and his religious mind, determined that the cross was the sign or emblem of the beast of St. John's Revelations, and the practices of paganism have accompanied it without any increase of light. Whilst the signs of Judaism are too conspicuous in the very same practices and self-righteousnesses, entire sanctifications, total abstinences, and hypocrisies that distinguished the Scribes and Pharisees, and for which our Saviour passed such a severe denunciation upon them—"Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees," or *priests and ministers*, "hypocrites!"

In all times a spiritual Saviour has been believed in, but it has been the distinguishing characteristic of the ages since He came that, after being manifested in the flesh upon earth, He has been continually and persistently crucified by people professing to follow Him, and, whilst calling Him, Lord, refusing His guidance and directions.

Verily, such stars must fall from such heavens, and such heavens be rolled up as a scroll, and the day of the Lord will give such correction as such heavens and such stars require.



CHAPTER VII.

The Manichæan Heresy Accepted for Christianity—The Chief Concern of Priests and Ministers—Confessions and Long Prayers—The Cause of the Growth of Infidelity—Various Reports of the Condition of Christianity—Cardinal Manning's Letter—Infidelity and Christianity Compared.

THE abuse of the spirit, or the evil spirit, they have gone forth in is an overwhelming charge against priests and ministers and converted men from the earliest times of Christianity to the latest. All records agree in giving weight to this. Where they have had by law power over the body, the abuses have been more easily observed and have been abundantly recorded, although how fearfully and how dreadfully power over the body was and is still in some places abused will only be fully known at the last day. When this power was taken away, power was established over the mind by broad and loud denunciations of hell fire and torment for ever upon sinners, particularly upon those who defied them; for those who did so there could be no hope, or these good men could have no authority. To tell them that they were perishing would be of no comparative value for such a purpose.

The Manichæan heresy, introduced by the old Persian philosopher Manes, that God is the Creator of good, and that the devil is the creator of evil for our destruction,

and the king of hell necessarily, was earnestly condemned by the early Christian Church; but so plausible a belief, and one, too, so easily taught, so easily understood, and so well calculated, according to the judgment of priests and ministers, to deter people from evil and to maintain their authority, has established itself instead of our Saviour's teaching. This very Manichæan heresy is now that which is called Christianity, and he is now the heretic who should proclaim his want of faith or belief in the devil and hell fire and torment for ever.

Had priests and ministers followed our Saviour's directions and example quietly and unostentatiously, instead of submitting themselves blindly to St. Paul's and other saints' directions and example and commands, the evils that the multitude suffer from could have had no existence; but their intense earnestness in forcing their views upon the pagans and idolaters they were surrounded by, and the absurd value that they placed on martyrdom, inducing them to covet it and to court it; their utterly ignoring our Lord's command to lay hands on the sick, and want of belief in His promise that they should be healed—resulted in their absolutely putting one another to death, out of divisions of all kinds: so out of this our Saviour's prophecy was fulfilled—the nearest relatives betrayed and put one another to death, and a desperate confusion has taken place, amongst people calling themselves Christians, when there was no law of sufficient force to protect them from one another. And their self-confidence and virulence only increased with every increase of power they obtained, and slayings and torturings and burnings alive and burings alive, and every imaginable ingenuity of cruelty, had full sway and glutted

itself to satiety, only showing those who call themselves Christians now what their condition would be were it not for the controlling power of the law.

The heresy of the Manichæans would appear to be but little understood in these days, and nothing more surely indicates absence of faith in God than the want of interest therein, by which it has supplanted Christianity, notwithstanding that it is so well recorded that no educated person can well excuse his ignorance of it.

Manes was desirous of introducing a teaching of all ancient religions as being consistent with Christianity; but, notwithstanding its condemnation by those who knew perfectly what our Saviour's teaching was, the record of which is abundant and indisputable, the priests and ministers appointed to revise the Scriptures have taken advantage of the opportunity to reverse our Lord's teaching to that which, there is no doubt, is now a part of the faith of those who call themselves Christians, and even to prostitute our Lord's prayer to subvert His teaching. This, unfortunately, is not the only portion of Scripture that has been so tampered with, and fasting, of the character that is prevalent, must receive support as well by the revision, or rather the abuse, of passages that can only be made to do so by a forced construction.

There are no persons who would so attempt to subvert any ancient records to support that which they wished to have believed, except priests and ministers, without having the unanimous voice of the people raised in condemnation of the act. Priests and ministers, however, are so hedged about by the superstitions or devoutness of the multitude that they are encouraged thereby to commit this great

wickedness, and do so, as they do many other evil things, with impunity.

The wilfulness on the part of priests and ministers, which has ever been a characteristic feature pertaining to them, will account for the singular circumstance that our Saviour's denunciations of continuous fiery correction was only upon priests and ministers for what they did, or upon His own apostles, or those He sent forth, if they should be disobedient to His teaching and unfaithful to Him. His assurances that the sins and wickednesses, and even the blasphemies, of the multitude should be forgiven them; that they should not be held in remembrance against them, with gracious assurances and promises to all those who would come to Him and accept His sacrifice—are consistent with His love and mercy to sinners. But neither His denunciations upon priests and ministers, or on His own disciples or followers if they were disobedient, nor His gracious promises and assurances to sinners have a counterpart in any other religion.

Priests and ministers now reject all this and reverse it, and, whilst professing to have faith in Him, their belief in *the devil and all his works* teaches them to fight the devil before everything, with such threats of everlasting punishment on the multitude, that a more terrified, wretched, miserable, and dejected-looking people, so lost in doubts and difficulties and so bewildered in subtleties as those called Christians are, it would be impossible to find again on the face of the earth.

But whilst priests and ministers generally teach thus, it is known by those who are educated men that the Scriptures give no authority for such teaching: it is only because

they would draw but poor congregations if they ignored such preaching and teaching, and because their stipends would be of such a character that they could but with difficulty maintain themselves and their families that they do so. Without this teaching, all priests and ministers would find themselves without temporal power, and without temporal wealth, with as little indeed of either as our Saviour had. That this is no new thing may be seen by the records of Jeremiah, for he says (v. 30, 31): "A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and My people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?" the people then, as now, supporting the priests and ministers in their evil teaching, notwithstanding all that Jeremiah could advance against it, just as they supported the Scribes and Pharisees, or priests and ministers, in crucifying our Saviour.

In the present day all priests and ministers are agreed that the Almighty is not the Creator of moral evil, but our Saviour expressly says that it will be more tolerable in the judgment for the worst immorality than it will be for those spiritual people who saw His mighty works, and would not hear or receive Him, and who are not charged with any immorality.

The Scribes and the Pharisees told our Saviour that had they lived in their fathers' times they would not have cast out and killed the prophets as they did, and it is therefore consistent that, as they nevertheless crucified our Saviour, who was God's own Son, those who fill the seats of the Scribes and Pharisees now, whilst reprobating the acts of those who went before them, should fall into

worse things than they did who professed only to kill the body for the good of the soul, and that they should send the souls of those they condemned into eternal and everlasting torment in flames of fire with, as they say, the devil and his angels after death.

There was some excuse for the first man who was born again, or spiritually born, if he became spiritually proud, or even fierce, or if he taught that which was untrue, or if, as it is shortly expressed by our Saviour, "he was a liar from the beginning." But with His light and His life shining, as it has done, for nearly two thousand years, the history of so-called Christianity forms a comment on the perversity of man or of his weakness and his inability, and yet of his determination to do good, in his own way, of the most extraordinary and of the most frightful character.

So far from visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction, so far from keeping unspotted from the world, being the chief concern of the Church, the chief concern of all parties or Christian Churches has been to make everyone believe, as each ministry did, rightly or wrongly, and to obtain power to do so in every possible way—to keep themselves unspotted from the views and opinions of one another; to maintain the apostolic succession and to lay hands on one another; to dress in long, or rich, or white, or various coloured raiment; and to have as many coats as possible. And the result will be that when our Saviour comes again, they will not be able to recognize Him, and He certainly will not know or recognize them.

Whilst assuming power over the body, however, the Roman Catholic priesthood did not take away all hope of redemption hereafter. This was the work of a more

Pharisaical and less pagan body, from whom all power over the lives or liberties of men had been taken away, and whose power could only be effectually established by broad and loud denunciations of hell fire and torment for ever upon sinners. For them there could be no hope, or these good men could have no authority.

That which is highly esteemed by men is an abomination to Him, and that which is denominated "the work of the devil" is His strange way with man, whereby He instructs and teaches those who are not at enmity with Him, and enlightens and prepares His creatures for better things, as priests and ministers appear to be utterly unable to perceive or to appreciate, and are only able to denounce *this wicked world*, for which He will try them hereafter, and will punish them as they deserve for condemning His work and prostituting His word, and blaspheming to suit their ends and purposes, darkening the minds, and driving to infidelity those whom He has created and placed in a world where He has made everything "very good."

The confessions and the ablutions whereby they do indeed lead captive silly women are but delusive forms of *religion*, and have no spiritual value. When they are judged by His word and by Him who heard no confessions, what will their defence be?

The two heaviest blows that have been struck at the example and teaching of our Saviour, "Not to think that we shall be heard from our much praying, and to heal without hearing confessions," is St. Paul's command to pray without ceasing and St. James' advice to the brethren to confess themselves one to another.

A wonderful inconsistency has now obtained its fulness,

and those that proclaim themselves His ministers, who has created all things for His pleasure ("For Thy pleasure they are and were created") are so devoid of faith in Him as a God of love that they proclaim to the multitude who do not presume to be His ministers, and who are not told by Him to lay hands on the sick, that He will hereafter put those who are disobedient *either to Him or to them* into eternal torment in flames of fire in a place called hell. Whether they are disobedient to them or to Him would appear to be of no consequence; indeed, according to their teaching, there can be no difference, as they are quite sure that they are His servants.

A good illustration of the effects of the religious teaching of priests and ministers might be instanced in the reply of a *converted man* to one who denounced it, "What, then, is the use of being good if all go to the same place, and wicked men do not go into hell fire and torment for ever?" And another of the same denomination remarked: "I never will believe that God has created evil as well as good." The old, old story, "I will not believe."

The confessional has demoralized both people and ministry in every country where it has been introduced, and it has in many countries brought the lives and liberties of the people into absolute subjection to the ministry or priesthood, who have, in every instance, abused the power thereby obtained with a cruelty and with a profligacy that exceeds in description and in horror whatever could be advanced against those entrusted with authority, who have laid no claim whatever to religious knowledge or to religious teaching.

To the blasphemous preaching and teaching that may

often now be heard from many priests and ministers ; to their presumptuous claims to direct the belief of the multitude and to be inspired by the Holy Ghost ; to the disclosures that, from time to time, reveal the true nature of the sanctimonious walk, and conversation of others, sometimes to their profligate and immoral lives, to which there are, of course, worthy exceptions, and to their spiritual pride, to which there is scarcely any exception at all—may be ascribed the birth and growth of that great infidel power which now threatens to overwhelm the whole Christian world.

A colporteur of the American Bible Society says that three-fourths of the citizens of Philadelphia and four-fifths of those of New York have no religion and no faith in the Bible. The American Christian Commission states that "three-fourths of the citizens of St. Louis never attend church, in Boston only one-fifth are Church members, only one in twenty is a Church member in Vermont" ; and it is said that throughout America not one in fifteen is a sound orthodox believer. *Scribner's Monthly* says : "At this very moment a black cloud of scepticism covers the whole mental horizon." The Bishop of Winchester says : "Infidelity is everywhere ; it colours all our philosophy and our commonplace religion." Professor Fisher says : "It pervades all classes of society, and is in the very atmosphere we breathe." The Rev. David K. Nelson says : "Three-fourths of the editors of our popular newspapers and nearly all of our law makers are infidels." The *American Quarterly Review* asserts that "seventeen-twentieths of the people are tinctured with infidelity." A member of the United States Senate said : "There are, I assure you, but very few members of this body who believe in your evangelical religion."

And Mr. Beecher says : " Four-fifths of the educated young men of the age are infidels."

If this be a true reflection of the religious condition of America what might be recorded of the condition of France, Germany, and Italy, and the other Continental nations and states, and of the condition of the United Kingdom ? It is even reported that in India, and certainly in the colonies, the same charges could be made.

As an appropriate sequel to the lamentations of the priests and ministers of all denominations of Protestants, the pastoral letter of Cardinal Manning may be appended, not less uncertain in its sound, although, as might be expected, the conclusions he comes to are very incorrect ones. He says :—

"No civil order in the world ever sank so low as the Christian world is sinking now, and will be sunk if the name of God be erased from its public laws. You have lately asked of those who make our laws that none should legislate for us except those who believe that there is a divine Lawgiver, whose law is supreme. But it seems as if we were being carried down a stream against which we cannot prevail, and from which there is no escape ; as if in a little while the public life and laws of the world will be no longer Catholic nor Christian, nor based upon a belief in God. Other foundation for men or for morals there is none. There are many who see where we are rushing downwards, and desire it ; and many who see it with horror, but with folded hands do nothing against it ; and many more who see nothing, and are being carried away unconsciously into a social and political state without God in the world. For the first time since the world began

it is openly rejecting God. The old world so profusely believed in the divine that God was everywhere and in all things. To them even the world was God, and all things were supernatural. Now God is nowhere, and exists no longer ; the world is dead. Necessity, then, is laid upon us, from the least to the greatest, everywhere and in every way, to bear witness for God, 'in whom we live, and move, and are.' In this there can be no neutrality. To be silent among the seditious is to abet treason. The law of the land still justly punishes offenders against God and His moral law—not indeed for its offences against Him, but for its damage to society ; and there is a clamour that such laws should be abolished. If men libel their neighbour they may be heavily punished. If they only libel God or our divine Redeemer we are told that no man should judge them. The Catholic flock in England is few in number, but we have only one heart and one voice in condemning these outrages on all that is divine. We are, not few only, but poor ; nevertheless rich in faith, not by our merits, but by the sovereign grace of God. Being poor, we are mixed among the people, where a belief in God, however clouded, still remains. The men of culture and the philosophers of this world claim their independence of intellect and their independent morality. But the people have not yet forsaken God, nor has God forsaken them. We are debtors, then, not only to our brethren in the faith, but to all men, that we bear witness for God, for His laws, and for His rights ; by a faithful fulfilment of all duties of religion ; by the sanctification of our households ; and by labouring in word and deed, by alms and by personal service, to sustain the belief in God and in His kingdom which has made our fore-

fathers and ourselves what we are. Our churches also are few, but they are well worn by the thousands who, Sunday by Sunday, in the holy mass, adore the Word made flesh and the ever-blessed Trinity."

His Eminence is greatly mistaken in supposing that the spread of what he calls infidelity will ever erase the name of God from our public laws, that priests and ministers will ever obtain the control of them, or that the public life or laws of the world will be less Christian because they will be directed by those stigmatized as infidels. The fall of the power of his Holiness the Pope, in Italy, and that of all priests and ministers there, does but precede the fall of the power of priests and ministers everywhere. The world is not rejecting God, but it is rejecting those who have not heeded our Saviour's words, and have abused the Scriptures, have depressed and darkened and enslaved men's minds, and overridden the law to obtain power over the lives and liberties of the multitude. So far from "the divine" being so profusely believed in, and that God was everywhere, and in all things heretofore, the testimony of everything that may now be read, giving evidence that can be relied on, is to the fact that "the devil" was believed to be everywhere through the teaching of priests and ministers, and that they only had power from above to withstand the Devil here on earth, to forgive sins, to put to death or torture in any way, or to leave them in a frightful place, called purgatory, in endless agony and torture.

How far this was treason against God and a libel upon our Redeemer will be judged of very freely now without any pains or penalties for so doing. The Catholic flock in

England, it seems, are, not only few, but poor ; it needs no prophet now to proclaim that they will be fewer and poorer, and that, too, by *the sovereign grace of God*. As God has been forsaken, so surely will He forsake those who have made Him a stalking-horse for wealth and power. To bear witness now for Him, for His laws, and for His rights will not avail, even if it were done scripturally. The sentence has gone forth, and words and promises of faithfulness and sanctification and personal service signify nothing when uttered by those whose light is derived, not from their genuine forefathers, but from those whom their forefathers persecuted, tortured, and burnt because of their bearing the light they now profess to be possessed of.

The last clause of this pastoral letter seems to contradict all that has gone before, but if it is of any value there is no danger of any so-called infidel interfering with those by whose feet the Churches are so well worn.

"At evening time there shall be light." This light from on high is now falling, and the liberty of the captives is being proclaimed by One who is taking away all power from priests and ministers to injure in any way the sheep of His pasture, and He has assured His people that "*the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.*" Such lamentations may, therefore, pass for what they are worth, whoever they may come from here.

Nothing is more remarkable than the resolute determination to override the law of the land by the doctrine of *the Church*, and this in flat contradiction of our Saviour's respect for it, even to His silently consenting to the woman being stoned to death, whilst He saved her from the

penalty by a course that no priest or minister would ever have thought of.

Our Saviour's objection to rule in any way and His respect for the law stand out in strong contrast to the determination to rule and the want of respect for the law by priests and ministers.

A woman might have seven brothers for husbands, or a man seven sisters for wives, according to His teaching, without their spiritual condition being injured thereby; for "in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage"; but the sophistries and the over-righteousness of priests and ministers would destroy our Saviour's teaching to maintain their prestige, to show forth their righteousness, and to keep up their authority. Vain are the records of history, vain are the results of later experience; their power over the minds and bodies of the people must be maintained. The privilege of offering up public praises and thanksgiving for *all things* is lightly esteemed, and all that our Saviour despised and condemned has become of the first consideration.

It is a fair speculation, in the face of the unsuccessful endeavour by priests and ministers to make the multitudes better by threats of fiery torment and eternal perdition hereafter, considering the spiritual ignorance on the one hand and infidelity on the other, now so overwhelming; that if our Saviour's commands had been simply obeyed, and those who professed to be His priests and ministers, working harmoniously together, could have gone into all the world teaching all nations what they knew spiritually of the results of faith, hope, and charity, as well as of the arts and sciences, and the various knowledge appertaining to a high

degree of civilization, with its cleanliness, temperance, and godliness, and preaching only the good news of salvation to every creature, as opposed to paganisms and heathenisms and idolatries of all kinds, without any threats whatever, or attempts to portray the spiritual condition of anyone hereafter, or to prejudge them in any way, or to assume power of any kind over anyone; whether the results of their labours would not have been of a much more satisfactory character. Indeed, having in view the conditions of the populations in England, on the Continent, and in America, the question may well be asked, Could any course that might have been pursued have resulted in anything worse than the foregoing accounts portray, without reference in support of the argument to the frightful religious history of those ages now looked upon as dark ones, notwithstanding the profession of Christianity maintained through them all?

In any other profession certainly that would be the conclusion arrived at from such premises, and a change for the better from these considerations might be assumed. In the profession of religion there seems to be no hope of a change in priests and ministers and their teaching whatever; and so far from going abroad into all the world and preaching the good news of salvation to every creature, with a few exceptions, those who call themselves His priests and ministers stay at home and preach that none will be saved but those that believe in their interpretation of the Scriptures and join their Church.

If the tree is to be known by its fruit, then that which is called Christianity should by this time be full of good fruit to fulfil our Saviour's words; and the great Christian nations,

or those professing Christianity as their national religion, should proclaim its character, with results of a very different kind to those notoriously existing.

When our Saviour first sent forth disciples, He told them, "As ye go, preach, saying the kingdom of heaven is at hand"; and after His resurrection, still His cry to them was the same, "Go ye into all the world, and preach [the good news of salvation] the gospel to every creature." And instead of doing this those who have called themselves His priests and ministers, in obedience, forsooth, to His commands, have exceeded the preachings of the Scribes and the Pharisees and the pagans of old, and, refusing to believe this themselves, they have ever been going into all the world preaching the bad news of hell fire and torment *for ever* for sinners, telling sinners very often that they are the children of their father the devil, urging one another to make greater exertions by publishing letters calling on one another to recollect how many generations have gone down to hell who are now in torment for ever, and to make strenuous exertions to prevent the present generation from going there likewise. And every imaginable change of such matter has been trumpeted to the multitude for ages and ages, with all sorts of threats, to make people good; and the result is the widespread and overwhelming infidelity they complain of. And those who have done this are confident, beyond the possibility of convincing to the contrary in any way, that they are "the little flock" who are to have the kingdom, and who hereafter will hear, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Now a generation of human beings amounts to about one billion four hundred millions of souls, all created by a God

of love and mercy, in all imaginable sorts of conditions, and capacities for improvement, of whom His immediate companions declared there was not one without sin, and that whoever said he was without sin was a liar. He told His disciples to improve this great multitude by teaching them that which they were ignorant of, that they were capable of understanding, showing them in every way that which was good from that which was evil; and the course generally pursued, being just the reverse of what He ordered them to do, has had the effect of dwarfing and depressing and darkening the minds of those they professed to teach, and of bringing them into such a condition that they are generally unwilling to receive any spiritual instruction at all, and dislike to hear about religion, except by the few attending at some church or chapel, not one of whom believes in the salvation of every creature, but are all either in an abject state of fear and trembling on their own account, or in *professed* anxiety about the great multitude, who, they know, are lost and going into torment for ever, who will not hear their teaching, and whom, therefore, the Almighty does not look after or care for at all.

If the tree is indeed to be known by its fruit, there is certainly more peace and happiness, more intelligence and progress, more care for the lives and liberties of the people, more care for the supremacy of the law and the preservation of property and persons of every description from wrong and violence and torture, and less idolatry and superstition, since the growth of the tree of what is called infidelity—than the tree of what is called Christianity can boast of.

That this will also help to bring down the stars, and that it will roll up the heavens as a scroll, there is but too much

probability. But the foundations will nevertheless stand sure ; the Lord will still know those that are His, although all that take His name in their mouths may not depart from iniquity.

Apart from any desire for that authority they are always so anxious for, and so certain that without it they could do no good, an intelligent comparison of our Saviour's words, as addressed to various persons, would have enabled them to perceive that, of the great multitude, He declared that the houses of those who would not hear His words would fall when the storms and tempests of life came, whilst the houses of those who heard His words, and who were guided by them, would stand ; that His disciples, who had received spiritual life and would not endeavour to be humble and, like little children, willing to be taught, should be beaten with stripes according to their deserts, whilst any who went into excesses with those who ate and drank to excess should be cut off and receive their portion with the unbelievers ; that he who laid up his talent in the earth, or remained silent after being instructed by Him, should be cast into outer darkness ; but that those who had received that spiritual life with which the Scribes and Pharisees, or priests or ministers, had been acquainted, and who, consequently, could not perish, and who, notwithstanding, blasphemed His Holy Spirit, should never have forgiveness, neither in this world, neither in the world to come, but that they should *always* be subject to correction of a fiery description. These ministers and priests, or Scribes and Pharisees, taught that there was a great devil, or god of evil, who was the author of evil, and charged our Saviour with casting out devils by power obtained from him ; conse-

quently they taught that which was blasphemy against His Holy Spirit of love and self-sacrifice. The present preaching that the devil has power to create evil would necessarily amount to the same thing. Thus every man's freewill would be taken away, and he might lay all his wickedness on the devil by whom he was told he was tempted.

The maintenance of their authority was always the matter of the greatest consideration with the Scribes and Pharisees, and their natural pride and self-confidence were only increased and intensified by the spiritual life they had had given them ; whilst if our Saviour's cautions, examples, and precepts are of any value, nothing could be worse for the interests of true religion than that priests or ministers should have power of any kind, inasmuch as there are no persons who are so sure to abuse it, and to be led by their own ideas, rather than by His directions, or to copy from little children, and to be like them. That they should become as little children suggests a contrast of a very grave character, which priests and ministers appear very often to become instead.





CHAPTER VIII.

The Lesson of the Little Child—Our Saviour's Manifestation to Destroy Evil Teaching—Our Saviour's Use of the Apocrypha—Wesley's Opinion of the Classics—The Four Gospels—St. Paul's Writings—St. Paul the Father of the Saints—Salvation Army—The Roaring Lion—Evil Spirits.

It was to His disciples who had been born again that He gave the startling lesson, by putting a little child in their midst and telling them they must be like him; not to the busy, active toilers of the world, whose energies would often be fully taxed, their tempers tried by having to resist violence and wrong, with excesses of all kinds to be encountered, that little children would be unfit for and useless, and upon all of whom the Lord has great mercy.

So, then, after a man has been born again, if he becomes like a little child, he is *converted*, otherwise he becomes an evil spirit.

Now, how far would such a description apply to Scribes and Pharisees, or priests and ministers and so-called converted men—a little child? He is always pleased with what he sees his father doing, and, behold, everything that his father has done is *very good*! Even though a lion that he has made should kill a lamb, he does not condemn his father, but looks patiently on at work that he cannot understand, and that is incomprehensible to him. He is

not troubled at not being the greatest, but is quite content to be where his father has placed him. He never notices what others eat or drink, but endeavours to be a good child, and not to eat or drink too much himself. He does not think of condemning any chain of his fathers or of calling his father the devil. A little child does not think of putting people to death, or of torturing them, or imprisoning them, or coercing them in any way on account of what they believe; but always attends to what others say and thinks it over with his father.

A little child joins with others in innocent amusements, and is quick to perceive any impropriety in them.

A little child requires correction sometimes, and loves his father all the more for it. A little child—but it would be too ridiculous to continue to show how very little Scribes and Pharisees, or priests and ministers and so-called converted men, resemble *a little child*.

It is quite inconsistent to address the multitude from such words, and from priests and ministers misunderstanding this, and encouraging that energy of mind which those who are born again will know something of, the pride of a priest or minister has become proverbial in all countries, and their deeds, where the tree of life or the law has been subservient to them, and sometimes even where it has not been so, have been of the most atrocious character, carried on under a guise of humility dressed up in long raiment, and the poor multitude has been preyed upon with the most unrelenting zeal, the kingdom of heaven, or the Church, as the meaning of the term is in Scripture, being skilfully so portrayed as to convey the meaning of a place of great happiness hereafter, and utterly prostituted

to the purposes of priests and ministers, whose creation of a place called hell might be commented on in a similar way.

It may be quite consistent with the spirits that influence priests and ministers and so-called converted men to condemn sinners who will not be governed by them to everlasting torment in flames of fire for ever and ever, but it would be quite inconsistent with the spirit of a little child, and most utter blasphemy against His Holy Spirit, to speak such things, as well as against our Saviour, who, if He is to be believed, will be the only One to judge and condemn anyone to anything whatever, if His words are of any value as to conversion or judgment.

St. John says that our Saviour was manifested to destroy the works of the devil, viz., such spiritual works as were evil. He was manifested, therefore, to destroy the evil spiritual works of the Scribes and Pharisees, or the children of their father, the devil, or the priests and ministers and so-called converted men, and to try to induce them to become like little children. They were always determined to have by any means authority, and, instead of becoming like little children, always abused the spirit or became evil spirits. It would seem that from the beginning of spiritual life this strait and narrow way had been ignored, and he who first received it had become an evil spirit, or, as our Saviour expressed it, "a liar from the beginning," instead of becoming like a little child, such as our Saviour Himself showed an example of in the midst of such gluttony and drunkenness and violence on the one hand, and the spiritual wickedness of pride, abuse of power, self-righteousness, total abstinence, and hypocrisy on the other, as never existed before, and has only been exceeded since He came,

by those who have used the prestige of His name to deceive and to mislead those who have blindly submitted to their authority, or who have been willingly led by them, or to destroy those who persisted in being faithful to Him in denouncing the spiritual works that He came to correct.

There is no book in the world that should have so much interest as the Bible with any sensible man. Apart from that which is miraculous, it contains the very oldest historical records that exist, the most useful lessons for all descriptions of people, the sharpest truths, the greatest wisdom ; but, just as the most powerful instrument or piece of mechanism, instead of being useful, is only all the more dangerous if placed in foolish hands, so it is with the Bible ; and the condition of the Christian religion and the progress of infidelity, which bids fair to overwhelm it at the present time, show most conclusively into what hands the Scriptures have continually fallen.

Our Saviour and His favourite apostle, St. John, quoted largely from the Books of Esdras, in the Apocrypha ; and the Book of Ecclesiasticus and the Book of the Wisdom of Solomon are peculiarly suitable for the guidance and instruction of the multitude. That such a book as that of Esdras was quoted from largely by our Saviour and His favourite apostle would be equivalent to an endorsement upon a bill of exchange, in a mercantile sense, to be excluded, however, from the canon of the Scriptures by priests and ministers, who seem to have undervalued His signature.

Written by inspired men, with the advantage of doing so after being conversant with the older Scriptures, and when God's progressive light was shining more brightly, there is

much in them of the most valuable character that certainly has not been supplied by those who discarded them, even by showing that "the wicked man that cursed Satan cursed his own soul," as the prophet plainly declares.

The loss that the multitude has sustained by the exclusion of Ecclesiasticus and the Wisdom of Solomon from the canon of the Scriptures cannot well be over-estimated, except by comparing it with the loss of the Scribes and Pharisees, or priests and ministers and so-called converted men, by lightly esteeming the Books of Esdras. Thus in Ecclesiasticus xxxiii. 14, 15 we find: "Good is set against evil, and life against death: so is the godly against the sinner, and the sinner against the godly. So look upon *all the works of the Most High*, and there are two and two, one against the other."

As the Books of Esdras have been discarded such inspired passages as that contained in 2 Esdras iii. 20, "And yet tookest Thou not away from them a wicked heart, that Thy law might bring forth fruit in them," would carry comparatively but little authority, and the holiness that priests and ministers are hedged about with would appear to prevent the multitude ever coming to the knowledge that, although they were priests and ministers, they nevertheless had wicked hearts like other people. Notwithstanding all the testimony that there is of it from time to time, few persons of any spiritual knowledge could read the Books of Esdras attentively and deny the extraordinary and instructive character of many of the records: the three questions proposed to him by the angel that he could not answer; the information that he obtains how the spirit proceeds from the body after death, as the plant pro-

ceeds from the seed sown—repeated by St. Paul; the use that our Saviour made of the similes and prophecies in Esdras; the prophecies that St. John endorsed by using them, to some extent, in the Revelations; and much matter of a highly prophetic character stamp them as records of undeniable spiritual authority wherever any spiritual records would have weight. To teach that the epistles are of the same authority as our Saviour's words, and to discard such books as Esdras and Ecclesiasticus and the Book of Wisdom, in the Apocrypha, would scarcely recommend the judgment of those who do so as of a reliable character.

Had the Books of Esdras, Ecclesiasticus, and Wisdom only been received as canonical, and had they been generally used by the people with the other Scriptures, even if the other books therein had been excluded, they would most probably have prevented the Manichæan heresy from being adopted, with its accompanying blasphemies. But, with this heresy, the spiritual condition of the people resembles that of the Jews under the Scribes and Pharisees; and how far this was superior to that of the heathen or pagan nations by which they were surrounded, history must decide. Certainly the English people of the lower class are not superior to the nations around them; they are not, in the bulk, more intelligent than heathen or pagan people, nor in their recreations and general tenor of life are they more intellectual. Nor do the priests and ministers by comparison with the Scribes and Pharisees, appear to more advantage.

Our Saviour's teaching has not been adopted by them any more than it was by the Scribes and Pharisees, and the results consequently would be the same. Morally, the con-

dition of certain classes in London and other places is certainly lower than Jerusalem was in, in our Saviour's time ; it is only in scientific attainments by the few, in the improvement of the common law, and in commerce, that our superiority can be seen, neither of which has any power to correct vice and immorality, except in public and in extreme cases. And it is indeed fortunate that the law has grown for the protection of all classes from one another, respecting neither rich nor poor in its ordinary action. But no thankfulness for the gift of the law exists ; nor is there any consideration, apparently, that it is the means that the Almighty has been pleased to use to bring men into a better temporal condition, if not into a better spiritual one.

These things, nevertheless, are being better understood daily by the laity, and a late author, without referring to the Scriptures, thus delivers himself : "The evil is for improvement, the good is for enjoyment. Without evil to stimulate us we should never elaborate any good work ; neither art nor science would progress ; for evil is necessity, the mother of invention, the spur that urges us on to improvement. God is not yet justified by man for the creation of evil ; people do not understand its mission, and, instead of giving God the praise for its creation, they ascribe it to another." And Scribes and Pharisees, or priests and ministers and so-called converted men, teach the multitude to hate Him and to fight against Him as *the devil*, whilst they are in great ignorance as to what is spiritual evil and what is temporal evil, or what is spiritual good and what is temporal good. His example and conditions and directions are lost upon them ; His great sacrifice is abused ; and, determining to do good in the way

they are most confident is right, they identify themselves with those condemned by our Saviour as "highly esteemed among men," but "abomination in the sight of God" (Luke xvi. 15).

St. Paul's record, referring to those who would not submit themselves to the righteousness of God (Rom. x. 3), and the remark that God is not yet justified by man for the creation of evil, are equivalent to the same thing, showing that the Scribes and Pharisees, or the priests and ministers, in his day, as well as in our Saviour's, and priests and ministers and so-called converted men, in later ages and at the present time, are, in that respect, in precisely the same condition. Some may admit that the Lord is the Creator of evil, but to a certain extent only. These feel as the Jews of old did, and limit the Almighty. The meek and the quiet spirit *in a priest or a minister*—which is, in the sight of God, of great price—is ignored, and pride and vanity and conceit spring up spontaneously, under an outward guise of solemnity and feigned humility, to such an extent as to have become absolutely proverbial. Their ways of doing good are just, as of old, the reverse of our Saviour's; and on the Continent they have produced millions upon millions who believe as the Sadducees of old did—history repeating itself; whilst in England there are increasing hosts of V——s and B——s, with multitudes of followers, whom their ignorance and their blasphemies have raised up. And the stars are falling from heaven, and the heavens, or the Churches, are being rolled up as a scroll.

These people dislike our Saviour because they identify Him with the priests and ministers, who say they are His; but the great majority of priests and ministers are identical

with those with whom He was at variance from the time He was twelve years old, apparently, until they crucified Him. And the denunciations that He made upon them are now used by the priests and ministers upon the great multitude for the purpose of deterring them from sin and wickedness, and thereby making them better, with the result—that was foreseen by our Saviour—of destroying that faith which He wrought so earnestly to fill them with, and introducing that terrible confusion which our Saviour pointed out would take place in consequence. (Matt. x. 34—37.)

Had the Jewish Talmud and the Apocrypha been studied by the sons of the prophets, with however humble intellects, instead of the classics, different results might have been obtained. Of the classics, John Wesley declares that conversations occur between men in them that, with any regard to decency, could only take place between persons of opposite sexes; so that there could be very little consistency or profit in storing their minds with such matter.

It may yet be recorded, notwithstanding their great numbers, how many English and other fathers have educated these of their children for the priesthood or ministry because of their absolute unfitness for other professions or occupations, the profession of religion being supposed to require less intelligence than others. After hands have been laid upon them a miracle is wrought, even if none is wrought for the sick; and the Scriptures and all their ancient records are made plain to them. They are then qualified to be teachers, not only of that which he that runneth may read, and of that which the wayfaring man will not err in, but of the hidden things also that are only to be discerned spiritually, with a result and with conse-

quences that might have been anticipated from such teachers, puffed up, as only such teachers could be, by the deference and respect paid to them, on account of their clothing and their profession, and that the hands of others have been laid upon them, blasphemously assuming to convey to them God's Holy Spirit, but really only sending forth an addition, very often, to the many evil spirits that St. John saw being sent forth many centuries ago.

A belief in the inspiration of the second chapter of Ecclesiastes, and a knowledge of its teaching—that those who are desirous of being priests and ministers must expect to be assailed by temptations and trials beyond other men; that only the choicest might be successful in encountering, and in which many would necessarily fall—might have saved much disappointment to both sons and fathers, and have induced them to pause before being guilty of such presumption and running the most unfitted, naturally, into such spiritual dangers and temptations.

In reading portions of Scripture, it should never be forgotten that what is there recorded is recorded by men liable to error, although inspired, and subject to the same passions as we are; but that in reading the records of *our Saviour's words* there is no fear of error from any cause of this kind.

The promise that was made by our Saviour at the last supper to the apostles was, that His Holy Ghost should bring to their remembrance all things that He had taught them. This was fulfilled when the four gospels were transcribed, each consistent with the others, and yet neither wholly in agreement in its records with the rest. This promise was not made to St. Paul, and his calling himself an apostle does

not make him one; nor does St. John recognize him. Before our Lord's crucifixion and ascension nothing of the kind existed, and only the guidance of the Holy Ghost could have so inspired the writers as to have made each support the others in so utterly important a matter after the lapse of so many years, and yet in such a way that it is in perfect accordance with the law of evidence. Beyond this there was no necessity for guidance and direction, and those who have presumptuously pleaded this promise, and relied on their own conclusions are in great number, whose conduct and teaching have only been destructive to the records of our Saviour. Nothing could lead to worse results or to greater confusion than that every man who was born again should imagine that the spirit given him would lead him into all truth, or that Church councils, or conclaves, or assemblies of priests or ministers, or men of any description or denomination, should conclude that they had received of our Saviour's meek and lowly Spirit, and that they must necessarily; therefore, come to right conclusions. It has caused our Saviour's example and teaching to be ignored and the most injurious, and even iniquitous, courses to be agreed to and acted on.

St. Paul's epistles, now used for guidance and direction much more than the gospels are, are simply his own writings; and his doctrines of predestination, of election, of entire sanctification, and of reprobation, with his directions as to casting out and not eating with others, praying without ceasing, and other matters inconsistent with, if not destructive of, our Saviour's teaching, have caused dissension and division, and religious animosity and hatred, and malice and much uncharitableness.

His blessed and gentle and Holy Ghost, the Comforter, who came to save men's lives, and not to destroy them, must have been grieved at many things besides the destruction of Ananias and Sapphira, if the Acts of the Apostles are to be relied on. St. Paul even indicates those who were to be excluded from intercourse with those he called brethren, and this spirit has increased continually.

No one, from the records we have of Church history of all kinds, would ascribe the divisions, the hatreds, the spiritual pride, the total abstinences, the determination to rule, the slaughters, the burnings and the torturings, the frightful immorality and violence, the immurings of men and of women, that the cloak of religion has covered, to the remembrance or to the guidance of His Holy Ghost, the Comforter, as claimed by those who have perpetrated them; admitted and believed by the unfortunate people who have suffered for generations such tyrannical abuses, or that it could be imparted from age to age through so foul a channel, culminating at length in the claim of one man to be supreme in the earth and infallible.

No more shameful imposition could well be attempted than that men in whose faces the greatest suppressed fierceness will appear on every slight as well as on every serious occasion, and whose solemnity covers tempers that brook no opposition, should claim the indwellings of the gentlest, the meekest, and the most self-sacrificing spirit, with the power of pointing out the strait and the narrow way without error of any kind; with sham miracles to attest the truthfulness of their teaching, sham fastings, sham holinesses, sham abstinences, sham humility, and shams of every or any kind that will maintain for them a prestige over the multi-

tude and a maintenance from it, with more or less of the long raiment and broad phylacteries that accompanied the ministry of the Scribes and Pharisees in our Saviour's days.

There is a great contrast between some important portions of St. Paul's epistles and our Saviour's example and precepts, and even the records attributed to him are inconsistent sometimes with one another. The over-righteousness displayed, his urging the multitude to make their bodies living sacrifices, his declaration that he would eat no meat if by so doing he made his brother to offend; his conclusion that those who did not marry did better than those who married, although quite consistent with the abstinence and reasoning of the Pharisees by whom he was educated, is wholly inconsistent with our Saviour's teaching to the multitude, with His own words that there was not one that was righteous, and with the records of the Old Testament.

Our Saviour, indeed, gave great offence to the Scribes and Pharisees by eating as they did not approve, and by drinking wine which they condemned as causing drunkenness, whilst He condemned their abstinences and fastings and entire sanctifications, and denounced them as hypocrites. It may be inferred that He would condemn all such self-righteousness now as much as He did then, when people endeavoured to induce others to conform to such practices and claimed to be exemplars for the guidance of others in them. The best of those who do this will find enough in themselves to justify our Saviour's applying the epithet of hypocrite to them, without the assurance of St. John that the man who says he is without sin is a liar.

St. Paul may be said to be the very father of the saints

and their asceticisms, if not of the abominable trash and records of filthiness that accompany the downward course of their history, with but few redeeming characters, in contradistinction to our Saviour, who ignores those even that have honourable mention in the Psalms and other portions of the old Scriptures. "All that ever came before Me were thieves and robbers," and He never mentions anyone as a saint from the beginning to the end of His ministry, "Behold an Israelite, indeed, in whom is no guile," being all that He is recorded to have spoken in praise of anyone; otherwise His testimony is utterly against *the saints*, or good people, as they may be termed: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" and, "Why callest Thou me good? there is none good but One, that is, God"; and unless they who were His disciples were "converted, and became as little children, they should in no wise enter the kingdom of God." Such a commentary should have excluded these saints from prayer-books, and have preserved the multitude from the abuse of such people being prominently put before it for its reverence, thereby increasing superstition and ignorance where His words would otherwise be heard and remembered and profited by.

His sacrifice was a consistent and a perfect one, even to the death, for the benefit of those who will accept it. The sacrifices of hypocrites will not benefit anyone, and their sad faces will ever openly manifest them, even if they are manifested in no other way.

The sacrifice of our Saviour, wherever it is accepted, will produce humility and unity, kindness and forbearance toward one another; the sacrifices of hypocrites will pro-

duce spiritual pride and division, hatred and malice, vanity and conceit, and all uncharitableness.

Our Saviour never denounced a sinner except by His teaching good things. Those He condemned were priests and ministers, or men free from the charge of being sinners, with whom they classed Him. They were the holiest of men, entirely sanctified, and whose entire sanctification was admitted by the greatest number of those by whom they were surrounded, over whom they had sufficient influence to induce them to assist in crucifying Him.

There is nothing new in good temperanism and revivals and salvation armies and prayer-meetings and long prayers—they are all of the same character, and the product as denounced by our Saviour is the same with them all. “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.” The *Christian Herald* and other religious publications long ago noticed how soon the excitement consequent upon them evaporates, with corresponding melancholy results afterwards. Theatres, rinks, races, circuses, dissipations, and excesses of all kinds increase with the duties levied upon wines, spirits, and drinks of all descriptions; and infidelity and atheism and free-thinking bid fair to overwhelm such a Christianity altogether. There are abstinences and spiritual food and teachings enjoined by Him that these hosts of good men never think of, or, if they know anything of them, they appear to undervalue them; and they ever increase the evil and diminish that which is good.

At the same time St. Paul's remark should be remembered, that the Lord winks at ignorant but sincere people who, with good intentions, do that which is condemned; and

this appears to be the case with the Salvation Army. Those who testify that they have lost weariness, disappointment, sorrow, anxiety, uncertainty, despair, and fear of death, and that they have formed peace, joy, consolation, liberty, and the assurance of eternal life; of poor men, who testify of drunken, profligate, and wicked lives, confessing to the happiness and contentment, and of the peace and comfort in their houses where domestic violence and wretchedness had before prevailed, can scarcely be charged with hypocrisy. Other satisfactory testimony is so abundant that it can only be recognized as a good work for the poor and the lost and the ignorant and those abandoned to evil ways.

In a great measure the gulf that separates the wealthy, and the highly educated clergymen and ladies and gentlemen who are desirous of improving the multitude of poor and ignorant from across it, is the difficulty of holding communion with it; but there are those who are not known to the Church, or to priests and ministers, who hold communion with it, and who make friends of it to some purpose.

The charges already made against it of blasphemy and profanity show how readily abuses creep in when our Saviour's example of gentleness and quietness is ignored. There is also abundant evidence that it stirs up strife and hatred and violence wherever it goes, from its ostentation of total abstinence as its main object, its processions and prayer-meetings—adopting, in fact, the ways of the Scribes and Pharisees.

This great ostentation in doing good has no authority from our Saviour's example or commands; and, however temporarily successful, it will most assuredly break down in the

end, through extremes and excesses that His example and precepts, if attended to, would have guarded it against.

The greatest curse that can afflict any community is that of a priest full of ritualism and paganism, on the one hand, or of a minister full of long prayers and prayer-meetings, on the other, each equally believing in the devil as the creator of evil, and in hell fire and torment for ever for sinners who die without repentance—the one proclaiming his chastity by his celibacy, and his temperance by his fasting, while both may show forth their sobriety by their being good templars, as opposed to those who teach people to marry that they may be chaste, to use God's mercies of all kinds as not abusing them, that they may be temperate and sober, to encourage the merry heart and the cheerful countenance, and to have faith in God and our Saviour through earnest private prayer.

St. Paul's record that those who remained unmarried did better than those who married, and St. James' recommendation of confession, priests have especially turned to their purposes in dealing with the people ; and they have, through these and other passages, brought the multitude into bondage of the most shameful character. . When they have been sincere men, success has stimulated and increased their love of power and their self-righteousness ; and where, as in many cases, they have used them to gratify those passions that man is prone to, "as the sparks fly upward," a frightful condition of things has obtained that history can but partially reveal.

The record that it was better not to marry, and the belief in the devil and hell fire and torment for ever, gave additional force to the evils of the confessional, accompanied,

as it was, by pardons or forgivenesses of sins by priests and ministers, represented to release those who received them from suffering hereafter in fire and torment, opposed, as it is to our Saviour's teaching, and destructive, as it has ever been, to the spiritual as well as the temporal welfare of every community where it has been practised or where such a belief has obtained.

The evils the early Christians temporally suffered most from, may be understood from St. Peter's warning to those to whom he wrote his first epistle, when he concluded it by telling them to beware, or to be watchful and vigilant, against the power that he designated the devil, who, as "a roaring lion," he said, went about, seeking whom he might devour. This warning was very necessary to those who were endeavouring to make proselytes amongst pagans and heathens, who denounced them everywhere and sought their lives, putting them to cruel deaths from time to time without mercy. This was, indeed, a trial to their faith in God, as he reminds them; for these very pagans were believers in and ascribed the evil in the world, and the work the Christians were engaged in as well, to a supreme evil power, that they called the devil.

Peter and Paul, and hundreds of thousands of other Christians, suffered cruel deaths at their hands, but, grafting their belief upon Christianity, did a much greater injury to it. Had those who have done this had faith in God, or had those who persisted in thus blaspheming considered what must be the result from such teaching, it would surely deter them from it. It has darkened the minds of men, and brought division and dissension and hatred and malice and all uncharitableness

in its train ; it has completely inverted Christianity ; it has produced infidelity ; and it has supported, in wealth and luxury, the most stolid ignorance and idolatry in spiritual things.

It is difficult to decide whether he who teaches that the writings of Moses and the prophets are fables or they who continue preaching the devil and the roaring lion going about, seeking whom he may devour, in such quiet, law-abiding times as these, does the most injury to our Saviour's instructions to hear Moses and the prophets ; that there is nothing outside of us that can harm us if we are followers of Him ; and that all the evil we have to fear is within us.

Fathers see readily how wise it must be to teach their sons the devil and hell fire and torment for ever, thus to keep them in order ; and mothers, their daughters in like manner ; but are often horrified to find that their children have broken through all restraints and taken to evil courses, thinking little of religion and very much of amusements and theatres, if of nothing worse, glad to escape from religion, or what has been taught them as such, in any way.

The corrupt fruit of an evil tree : St. John's Revelations clearly point out in highly figurative language the result of amalgamating with pagans and Scribes and Pharisees. God forbid that priests and ministers, or men who think themselves converted, should ever have power over the lives and liberties of Englishmen ; better, far better, for humanity that the breadth of the foundations of Christianity should be added to, if it were possible ; that those only who show that they can heal the sick by the laying on of hands should

be acknowledged as His ministers, and the head of every family as its priest.

The evil spirits that St. John saw had gone forth were foolish and evil men, who had been appointed as ministers by the laying on of hands. Teachers who bow down to wood, and clothe themselves in long garments and in scarlet and purple and fine linen, are not the only ministers of whom to beware; there are still representatives of those who made long prayers and held prayer-meetings, whilst they bruised and marred the face of Him sent to guide them aright, who told them He was God's own Son, and was told by them that He was a devil.

Order, intellect, progress, and superiority to brutes, who know no God, is the result of the conflict that exists between good and evil, and that conflict will ever continue. Evil is God's work as well as good, and beyond the power of any minister to destroy. By interfering openly he will only increase it, for the law and its servants are appointed by Him to correct and keep order.

"Be still, and know that He is God," and that in His own good time He will reward those who copy Him and obey His directions and remember His words, not forgetting that all His spiritual denunciations were directed by Him only against spiritual men. Let those be thankful that indeed know that which is good from that which is evil; if they do, they are His angels indeed, but "we know" has ever been their downfall.

The endeavour by spiritual men to overthrow evil, by threats and denunciations upon the multitude from the pulpit or elsewhere, will ever result in increasing the evil and diminishing the good; and as education increases evil

will increase with it in consequence out of all proportion, and they will see no fruit for their labours ; they will be in vain.

An English paper of large circulation says the Rev. — declares that, after fifteen years of zealous labour in his parish, he considers it is in a worse condition than it was when he began.

God still rules upon the earth, and ever will rule “through the basest of men,” and in His own way keeps order ; and, as if to confirm His word, attempts and endeavours of priests and ministers and so-called converted men to rule have ever been attended with most lamentable results to themselves and to those over whom they have placed themselves : and this would always be the case if they were to be continued in the power that they still have.

It will be a happy day for the world when all shadow of power even is taken away from them, and all popes, cardinals, bishops, and priests and ministers, and all those who assume power of any kind, by having hands laid upon them, are divested of it and destroyed thereby, and the only hands that are laid upon any will be upon the sick.

The stars will surely fall from heaven, and the heavens be rolled up as a scroll, and the earth will be blessed with a blessing, and with light more fully than it has ever been ; and God's work will progress rapidly when such hindrances are removed. The great divisions of so-called Christianity, viz., the ministry of paganism and the ministry of blasphemy, will be effectually and permanently held in subjection, and light from God will be spread abroad, and that life which He blesses with contentment will be enjoyed by many, and evil will greatly diminish.

His wondrous and His beautiful creation will be observed and valued and cared for as it has never yet been seen, or valued, or cared for ; and His reign will be more glorious than it has ever been. Such will be some only of the results of taking away all power from priests and ministers, and they will receive the first reward of their labours from Him whom they have taught to be hated and denounced and blasphemed for creating evil, and their denunciations and blasphemies will have an end that they but little anticipate.





CHAPTER IX.

Address to Priests and Ministers from the Temporal Standpoint—
The Father the Priest of the Family—Dickens' View of Priests
and Ministers—A Pauline Ministry—The Testimony of Eye-
witnesses—Errors of St. Paul—St. Paul Inspired nevertheless—
Our Saviour's Inspiration the Highest—Obedience to Priests and
Ministers, and the Result—Beasts Cannot Sin—The Almighty's
Work—More Results of Evil Teaching—Curing Souls—Our
Saviour's Words after He came back from the Dead—Decay
Begins here as soon as Perfection has been Attained—The Term
"Satan"—The Term "Hell"—Preaching now and in old Times:

THUS far the sword of the Spirit has been only used. One
who writes in a monthly publication, called the *Contem-
porary Review*, thus addresses priests and ministers from the
temporal standpoint: "You have so debilitated the minds
of men and women by your promises and your dreams that
many a generation must come and go before Europe can
throw off the yoke of your superstition.

"But we promise you that they shall be generations of
strenuous battle.

"We give you all the advantages that you can get from
the sincerity and pious work of the good and simple among
you.

"We give you all that the bad among you may get by
resort to the poisoned weapons of your profession and its
traditions—its bribes to mental indolence, its hypocritical

affectations in the pulpit, its tyranny in the closet, its false speciousness in the world, its menace at the death-bed—with all these you may do your worst, and still humanity will escape you ; still the conscience of the race will rise away from you ; still the growth of brighter ideals and a nobler purpose will go on, leaving ever and ever further behind them your dwarfed finality and leaden stereotype. We shall pass you on your flank ; your fiercest darts will only spend themselves on air.

“ We will not attack you as Voltaire did ; we will not exterminate you ; we shall explain you. History will place each dogma in its class above or below a hundred competing dogmas, exactly as the naturalist classifies his species.

“ From being a conviction, it will sink as a curiosity ; from being the guide to millions of human lives, it will dwindle down to a chapter in a book. As history explains your dogma, so science will dry it up ; the conception of law will silently make the conception of the daily miracle of your altars seem impossible ; the mental climate will gradually deprive your symbols of their nourishment, and men will leave your system, not because they have confuted it, but because, like witchcraft or astrology, it has ceased to interest them. The great ship of your Church, once so stout and fair, and well laden with good destinies, is become a skeleton ship ; it is a phantom hulk, with warped planks and sere canvas, and you who work it are no more than ghosts of dead men, and, at the hour when you seem to have reached the bay, down your ship will sink to the lowest bottom like lead or like stone.”

Had hands obediently been laid upon the sick, instead of laying them on healthy and vigorous men ; had

they honoured Him they call their Master by obeying Him, He surely would have defended them, and He would have so enlightened them that they would have perceived the blasphemy of assigning the work of Him who is incomprehensible to a supreme evil power, called the creator of evil and the devil, in antagonism to Him who they say can only create that which is good, however supreme He may be.

Priests and ministers might then have held such attacks in contempt, unsupported, as they are, by the sword of the Spirit, and have all but ignored them as the Bible does ; but they have left themselves without any shelter. The weakest will overcome them, and while they sing hymns to the praise of Him they blaspheme, while professing to worship and to honour Him, He will abandon them in contempt now and deal with them effectually hereafter.

The most direct commands of our Saviour to His disciples as to what they should teach contain nothing of hell fire and torment for ever as the punishment of sin and immorality. He said to them : " As ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand," or, as St. Luke expresses it, " the kingdom of God."

After His resurrection He instructs them to lay hands on the sick, and to teach " all nations to observe whatsoever I have commanded you " ; and beyond all others His command was to preach " the good news of salvation to every creature," by which they who believed it would be saved from their sins, and those who would not believe it would remain in them. But instead of preaching this good news, heavy denunciations and threats, spoken by Him upon the Scribes and Pharisees, have been inverted and heaped upon sinners to deter them from evil and to make them good ;

and they have had just the contrary effect, increasing the evil, as our Saviour saw would be the result of their disobedience.

The threats of eternal punishment of the most horrible description, by which they have expected, not only to deter people from immorality, but also to establish their own power and authority, have but blunted sensibilities and driven people away from thinking upon so dreadful and so horrible a subject. And so far from fathers and mothers being the priests and instructors and trainers of their children, in too many instances there is no other religion in the house than is comprised in going to church ; or, if otherwise, it passes to the other extreme, and priestly interference, or long prayers and prayer-meetings, and holy days and holy times and total abstinence and pictures or images of saints and crosses, and confessions and absolutions overwhelm our Saviour's teaching and give power to priests and authority to ministers, and the strait and the narrow way is lost either in superstitions and fanaticisms and hypocrisies, that produce the worst results, or in infidelity ; and he who should be the priest of his family commits their instruction to those whose ways are denounced by our Saviour, with the assured results.

A great proportion of the multitude cast off all religion and live on in defiance of the mistaken endeavours of priests and ministers and missionaries to make them better, brutalized by what is presented to them as religion beyond all hope of recovery. The other part highly approve of this teaching, and, as Dickens remarks, "Those of the priests and ministers who pepper the highest will be surest to please them. They who strew the eternal path with the

greatest amount of brimstone, and who most ruthlessly tread down the flowers and leaves that grow by the way-side, will be voted the most righteous; and they who enlarge with the greatest pertinacity on the difficulty of getting into heaven will be considered by all true believers certain of going there. It is so at home, and it is so abroad." And, again, in moralizing upon happy and cheerful Laura Bridgeman, deaf, dumb, blind, and without taste: "Ye who have eyes, and see not, and have ears, and hear not; ye who are the hypocrites of sad countenances, and disfigure your faces that you seem unto men to fast, learn healthy cheerfulness and mild contentment from the deaf and dumb and blind. Let that poor hand of hers lie gently on your hearts, for there may be something in its healing touch akin to that of the great Master whose precepts you misconstrue, whose lessons you pervert, and of whose charity and sympathy with all the world not one amongst you knows as much as many of the worst among those fallen sinners, to whom you are liberal in nothing but the preachment of perdition."

The foundations, however, will still stand sure—they shall never be removed. God's holy Word has lived through much more troublous times, though it may never have been so shamefully prostituted or so badly interpreted by those who have but aped the humility of Him from whom they professed to copy, and whose blindness to the prophecies concerning themselves—ignorance of much of the figurative characters in which Scripture records are made, misconstruction of the plainest language to suit their own views, and the support they have met with from those who appear only too willing to be deceived—

must account for their presumption, and for the mischief they have wrought in the world.

It may be as well to remark that the name "Christian ministry," as given through the laying on of hands, is a misnomer; the correct designation would be "Pauline ministry." Certainly St. Paul's words are more generally remembered and preached from than our Saviour's, and the laying on of hands was the ordination of some of the apostles, and of him the most active of them, and not our Saviour's, which is of so totally an opposite character that it may be presumed totally opposite results would have proceeded from the test. St. Paul records that all will be saved, whereas our Saviour is recorded to have stated that the wicked perish; and, as it is difficult to reconcile such important declarations with each other, it might be as well to recollect that there are many less important ones that do not coincide with our Saviour's instructions and guidance, and that it is better to be guided by our Saviour's teaching than by St. Paul's. His views and opinions have prevailed rather than our Saviour's words, and those views and opinions were quite consistent with the education he had received from one of the greatest authorities amongst the Pharisees. Whether he intended the whole of his teaching for the multitude, or whether portions of what he wrote were simply intended to apply only to a class, as were portions of the words of our Saviour, does not appear to have been much considered by those who desired his ordination. But if everyone were to eat and to drink only that which he who might be considered his brother or his brethren would not be offended at, or if even ministers were guided by his conclusion that a life of celibacy was

better than a married life, experience shows that from total abstinence and other hypocrisies a condition of things would arise in every community of the most deplorable character.

The gospels and St. John's epistles and Revelation were written by those who were eyewitnesses of our Saviour's miracles, and St. John emphatically calls attention to this in his first epistle, beginning, "Which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled." These writers had the influence of the remembrance of His meek and holy and quiet Spirit to aid them in bringing to their remembrance that which they recorded; and they have this peculiarity, that they support one another and testify to their truthfulness in the same way that truthful witnesses, supporting events long past by their testimony, would do in the present day. They never contradict one another, although the accounts of each are different to the same extent that truthful men in the present day would vary in giving an account of what they had seen and heard some years after what they had seen and heard would have taken place.

In this way they have an overwhelming advantage over the epistles of St. Paul in what they teach. St. Paul heard from others, and he has not the meekness so fully displayed by our Saviour. He is for commanding and reproving and exhorting—"in season, out of season." He urges those he writes to, to do whatever they find to do with all their might; they are to pray without ceasing and to make their bodies living sacrifices: but there is no word of laying hands on the sick; it is not the mammon of unrighteousness that will ever receive him or those that

follow him into everlasting habitations ; there is to be no falling away or falling into the soil ; they are the foreknown, the elect, the predestinated from all eternity ; they are those who are perfected and who are sanctified, who will enter into life. Those who fall away will not receive forgiveness, as Peter did ; those who are to come from the north and the south, and the east and the west, and be received into the kingdom, when the children of the kingdom will be cast out, are not recognized by him, apparently, at all, but all are to rise after their own order. He shaves his head and purifies himself and goes into retreat in the synagogue with some others to comply with their ways and to deceive them into the belief that he is a Jew as one of themselves. He lauds charity as greater than faith, whilst our Saviour ever teaches faith as the greater. And his abstinence and his fastings and his great activity, apparently, brought much persecution upon himself and others who copied him through his earnest desire to make converts from paganism to his Christianity in any and in every way. He is anxious that they should keep some traditions not signified clearly. Whether they were of a character subject to our Saviour's condemnation of the traditions of the Scribes and Pharisees, having in view the injury that they did the multitude, cannot now be determined ; but he calls himself a Pharisee of the Pharisees, or one of the severest class, and may not have been able to rid himself of trusting in their traditions.

What would Christianity, or the teaching of our Saviour, have lost had St. Paul's epistles never come down to us ? Would the divisions and strifes and vanities and reproofs and condemnation of sinners had an existence ? He is but

too truly the guide of the priests and ministers, and they are but too truly his followers. They understand and remember his words, however much they may not understand or may forget the words of our Saviour, whom they call, "Lord, Lord!" As to being His sheep, hearing and knowing His voice, facts must speak for themselves.

It is utterly inconsistent to attribute the willing of the death of Ananias and Sapphira as the work of His Holy Spirit of meekness and lowliness and gentleness, the Comforter—the Spirit of forbearance with sinners to the utmost and of self-denial in becoming as "he that serves"; of Him who only reproved Peter by a look for blasphemously cursing and swearing that he did not know his Master; of Him who saved the adulteress from being stoned, and would not condemn her; of Him who would not allow fire to be called down from above upon His enemies, but declared that He came to save men's lives, and not to destroy them.

St. Paul instructed those to whom he wrote to exhort and reprove, to be instant "in season, out of season." They were to be all things to all men, that *they* might, by all means, save some, with nothing of our Saviour's example or His words to support or to encourage him in such teaching. Faith in God is destroyed thereby, and St. Paul's teaching and example have led astray thousands upon thousands who, like Dr. Talmage, in America, are continually deploring the myriads upon myriads that are going down yearly into the pit, and exhorting to superhuman exertions to save them; whilst our Saviour says there are *many* who will come from the north and the south, and the east and the west, who are guiltless of the blasphemies so taught, who will be received into His kingdom, when these

children of the kingdom will be cast out. Our Saviour impressed upon His disciples that they were to "have faith in God," not in themselves. Such followers and hearers of St. Paul's words forget our Saviour's declaration that it would be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the judgment than for those who, with all His mighty works before them, refused to hear and to believe His words or to be guided by His example.

St. Paul, whilst taking exception to those that were puffed up, had singular ideas himself; he thought he could impart spiritual gifts to people. So far from teaching the good news of the salvation of every creature to all men, he taught that those who sinned without law would perish without law, with reference to the still small voice that God has implanted in everyone, in a greater or in a less degree, according to the education received. Yet he declared to the Ephesians that all are by nature children of wrath; that everyone will be judged by our Saviour; and nevertheless declares that where there is *no law* there is *no transgression*; and that the law was given that offences might abound.

He absolutely calls upon the Corinthians to be *followers of him*, with the most confident assurance that he teaches that which our Saviour commanded; and those very epistles have now supplanted the good news of the salvation of every creature.

As the general view is that every record that is inspired is of the same authority, it may be as well to remember that St. Paul says that no one can call our Saviour *the Lord* but by the Holy Spirit; but no one who reads the Scriptures would place the inspiration of Isaiah on an equality with

that of Samson or with that of the prophet who deceived his brother prophet, and then prophesied his death by violence for his disobedience to the word of the Lord. Nor would all people, and the Jews in particular, have looked forward to a higher and a better source of instruction and guidance, through a Messiah, if the guidance and instruction that had been vouchsafed previously had been perfect. And as to comparing the inspiration of the apostles or of St. Paul with the fountain of inspiration that our Saviour was, whoever will reflect on the confusion and distraction and violence and crime that have taken place where this conclusion has been come to must see the inconsistency of doing so and the result of it in the history of Christianity.

It is worthy of note that St. John does not mention St. Paul in any way in his epistles—he must have known him and his writings and his activity—although he has now such eminence.

There are other records that cannot be reconciled with the records of our Saviour's words and teaching; but as free discussion becomes more general amongst the laity, they will be recognized and brought to the test of our Saviour's teaching.

At the same time it must not be supposed that St. Paul's inspiration was at all a doubtful one—the miracles that he wrought and the very matter of his epistles are sufficient to establish this, and, with certain exceptions, cannot be overthrown—but Christ's inspiration was higher than St. Paul's. Nor can there ever be any that will excel it. His teaching and His inspiration only have the stamp of perfection, even as He only was perfect amongst men—God's only Son, One

with the Father, and the Judge of all men. It would have been most inconsistent if St. Paul, or the apostles or prophets, or the records of St. Paul, or the records of any one of the apostles or prophets bore the same character. The command from heaven to *hear Him* would be entitled to no respect. Cursings might become established religious ceremonies. The most terrible dissensions upon religious questions would destroy all kindly feeling, and even promote religious wars where religious subjects were considered of such importance as to impel them thereto. Members of the same family might rise against one another in deadly conflict, and the most dreadful social evils would obtain a prolonged existence. Priests and ministers might even call themselves the sons of God, and claim to be the only expounders of the Bible, and yet be at utter variance, if not in deadly conflict, with one another, even if they spared those who were believers in Christ only, whom they might not consider Christians, and treat with contempt as not being of sufficient consequence to be noticed by them; simply because Christ was not acknowledged and believed in, and honoured or worshipped, but only looked upon as one of a sort of religious conclave, all equally perfect and all equally entitled to be obeyed. And His sacrifice might come to be looked on as that of a larger beast than that which Moses ordered for the ignorant as appropriate to the greater darkness upon spiritual things that existed. And all this would come into existence simply because there would be no faith in Christ, and that He would not be believed in or relied upon, and peaceful occupations and kindly relationships between men of all classes and all countries would be broken up, and the true interests of

mankind would be destroyed, because people would not be taught to believe in Christ *only*, but were required to believe in St. Paul and St. James and St. John and St. Peter and St. Jude, because they were inspired and were, they thought, all equally entitled to respect, and whose teaching, consequently, was all equally suitable for all times and for all people in all places, and whose guidance and records were all equally necessary to their salvation and for the teaching and salvation of the world. Such a condition might arise, indeed, as would render Christianity a curse, rather than a blessing, wherever a ruling party chose to adopt views that would be opposed by a minority of equally earnest believers in the Scriptures ; and bloodshed and slaughter and oppressions of all kinds might arise, and be justified out of some figurative or other records, more than justifying the attack of Mr. Morley, the writer in the *Contemporary Review*—nay, rather rendering it absolutely praiseworthy.

A minister was appointed not many years since to a congregation. He entertained the extreme views that the Scribes and Pharisees did, and he consequently divided the people, one-half of whom abandoned him and the Church. He had a peculiar talent for twisting the Scriptures to suit his purposes and views, which may be illustrated by a text that he preached from ; viz. : " Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone : but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." And he looked forward to the time when he should be in the grave, and bring forth much fruit from there, after sowing tares and witnessing the result of his labours here that even he could not reconcile to himself, as in accordance with what Christianity should

produce. His only hope was thus illustrated and supported, and a man of the most resolute and of the fiercest character, one that might be termed a regular firebrand, filled, as he thought, by the Holy Ghost, blindly pursued a course utterly denounced by our Saviour.

Such, on a larger scale, appears to have been the course pursued from ignorance by that ministry, which refuses to follow the example and to be guided by the words of Christ only, out of the confusion that must arise where all records of Scripture are considered to be of equal value ; and the result justifies the conduct pursued in the disunion and dissension and hatred and malice and all uncharitableness that can be found, nowhere in greater luxuriance or in more profusion than in so-called Christianity. And thousands upon thousands must have sunk into the grave, hoping that there they should bear forth something better than the tares they had sown here, only to be surprised by a judgment upon them, at variance with their conclusions, from what they understood of the Scriptures.

The records they were perfectly acquainted with, but they were unable to see or to understand the teaching contained in them.

St. John did not undervalue the blasphemy of *the devil*, but seeing, as he did, how paganism was being grafted on Christianity, he could only prophesy its ultimate destruction, and that the devil would be forgotten for a thousand years.

Without the creation of evil there could be no discerning between good and evil ; and there could be no intelligence, and intellect would be instinct, and we should be worse than brutes.

Evil is even more necessary in the world than good, and consequently, predominates, inasmuch as there could be no good without evil.

Evil must first exist, and, consequently, it is found that children naturally exhibit evil first ; and every civilized human being should know of the contention that always goes on within, and how difficult it is to get the advantage over the evil, and how easily we are led from the strait and narrow way.

A late writer represents a clergyman as saying, "We shall see how Christian perfection emerged gradually out of imperfection—nay, that it was only through imperfection that this perfection was possible."

St. John points out that there is no darkness in Christ—that His teaching is perfect. He had all the Scriptures and all the epistles before him when he made this record, and knew perfectly the Lord's Prayer, and asked often, "Our Father, lead us not into temptation," and, by his very silence with reference to all the other teaching in the Scriptures as perfect, and especially of St. Paul's writings, whom he must have known well, would show that they could not be considered so, though they were inspired, any more than the teachings of many who have divided Christianity, and who have assumed their being also inspired by the laying on of hands, and who have fought in battle and with one another, and done worse things in Christ's name.

All the fightings and slaughters, all the cruelties, all the divisions, all the hatreds and animosities, all the vileness, all the idolatry, all the ignorance, all the spiritual pride and vanity, all the vain assumption and imagination of

holiness, all the misery and wretchedness of so-called Christianity have been caused by want of belief in God as the Creator of good and evil, in Christ's example and His words as perfect, as going neither to the right hand nor to the left of the strait and the narrow way in anything that He said, or did, or lived ; and in *believing* that the records of the inspired writers were perfect likewise, and of the same authority and value, whereby those who have rushed into the priesthood or the ministry have been so bewildered and confounded that they have acted as bewildered and confounded people do—they have endeavoured to prevent others from reading that which would only confound and bewilder them under the same circumstances likewise, and they have taught what they believed to be right, to the best of their ability ; and bad, indeed, in the conflict that has arisen on all sides has been the result of the best of that ability.

There is no difficulty experienced by the great majority of holy men who have had hands laid on them in knowing the strait and the narrow way and in comprehending the Almighty and His ways ; and the wickedness of all those who will not be guided by them is so extreme that there can be no end to the punishment and no limit to the torments that they will have to endure hereafter in consequence. Of this there can be no more doubt than there is of their love and goodness in showing this to all they can make hear them. However much they may disagree, as priests and ministers, amongst themselves in other things, *this important Christian doctrine* is upheld by them all with a volubility unequalled otherwise in any imaginable way, except in their confidence in their own salvation and in the salvation of all those who are obedient to *them*.

No phase of paganism with which it originated has ever preached this *important doctrine* with such vehemence or with such persistency as Christians have, so much so that the whisper even of it is sufficient to silence those in the present day who are only restrained by the law from willingly obeying similar behests from priests and ministers, as in Roman Catholicism before now, that these leaders might give to destroy in any way those who doubt it.

As to any thankfulness that they are created with the ability to sin, and not, as beasts are, without any such ability at all, it never appears to enter into their imaginations; their holiness, and their spiritual authority, and their determination to make people good and perfect here, engross all their minds and leave no room for such instruction.

Faith or belief in the devil as the creator of evil for our destruction necessarily must destroy faith or belief in God as the Creator of both evil and good for our benefit, and for the development of intellect and for progress, rendering the teaching of priests and ministers inconsistent the one part with the other.

Without the evil, which they have all unanimously ever thought it right to denounce and to condemn so strenuously, the intelligence and the intellect of mankind would have been only a little above the instinct of the brute, even if it could have maintained its superiority at all, and would have descended lower at times; and the continuation by them of the pagan teaching of *the devil* as an antagonistic power to the Almighty appears to have been the only way they have had of accounting for a condition of things quite incomprehensible to them in any other way, thereby raising up a

spirit of hatred to the creator of evil, whilst they endeavoured to cultivate a spirit of love to the Creator of good, resulting in a dislike to think at all in any way about religion, and to leave all such matters to those who professed to understand them, and whose duty, indeed, above all others, it was to have done so.

That the Almighty has made laws and denounced evil with an everlasting condemnation ; that for mankind He created our Saviour, and made Him so perfect that He, not only broke no law, but was enabled to point out the strait and narrow way perfectly, and give attestation thereto such as no other could give ; that men who had received spiritual life should have put Him to a shameful death ; and that His death should be an atonement for the evil in Adam and in all men, and all the consequences entailed upon man by that evil, is in perfect accordance with all Scripture and all revelation of Him who is love. But without the creation of evil as well as good there could have been no law to show what was evil. Adam's intelligence or his intellect was of a very humble character, however perfect he may have been as a man—such, indeed, as the Scripture record shows him to have been—quite naked and unable to distinguish good from evil or to make himself clothing to cover his nakedness.

How long it may be before mankind is freed from the evil consequences of this want of belief or faith in our Saviour and in God, or whether they will ever be freed from it wholly in this world, it is impossible to predict, other than by the assurance of St. John that the devil will be cast into the bottomless pit of forgetfulness for a thousand years. Though priests and ministers have been deceiving

and deceived, God is not mocked; they have sown the devil and hell fire and torment for ever, and have reaped division and hatred and malice and long prayers and prayer-meetings and spiritual pride and uncharitableness and idolatry and ignorance of spiritual things; and darkness has come upon them instead of light, and poor, wretched spirits are called up by spiritualists, and nothing can be done for the multitude because of their unbelief, and the blasphemy of priests and ministers, any more than could be done for those among whom Christ was born and brought up, by Christ Himself; and the God of light and of love and charity and of kindness has abandoned them to their wretched belief, to their desire for power and authority, and to their own devices, which they all know so confidently is the strait and narrow way that Christ pointed out to them.

If nothing else indicated that some great event is at hand, the darkness that is upon priests and ministers would proclaim it. Whether this is the coming of the Lord or something significant of it, time only will show; but never since the creation of the world has there been so great a darkness of spiritual teaching, and never has the Lord's name been so continually blasphemed; never has that spiritualism which the Bible condemns spread amongst so many; and never was there less hope that those who call themselves His priests and ministers will destroy it. There would appear to be more probability, indeed, that many will swell the ranks of the spiritualists from sheer inability to find anything real elsewhere.

When priests and ministers obediently lay hands on the sick, and not on healthy men.

When the multitude are taught to understand that the Almighty is the Creator of both good and evil for our benefit ; and that evil of all sorts must exist before good of all sorts, or there could be no intelligence or intellect in any man.

When the multitude are taught that the devil and hell fire and torment for ever have been borrowed by priests and ministers through absolute ignorance or, something worse, from paganism.

When the multitude believe in Christ and in His teaching and preaching only : then will the kingdom of God upon earth be begun, which He preached of, and swords will be turned into ploughshares, and spears into pruning hooks, and the Almighty will be worshipped through Him who only has revealed Him, and evil will diminish, and not increase ; the good will increase, and not diminish ; and His work will progress wonderfully.

As to curing souls, if bodies when in evil case were abused in the same manner, the law would soon be put in motion to protect them. The enmity to God which, amongst other evil things, is natural to everyone, has been increased and intensified in educated men, and it has driven them in multitudes of cases from such religion altogether. Where from weakness of mind or from ignorance such a religion has been received, a slavish submission and deference to priests and ministers have been developed, much approved of and applauded, as a matter of course, by them. Children so educated are necessarily much subdued, and live in great dread of the devil and hell fire. But the rising generation are much complained of as falling away into scepticism as they grow up, and but too often give

themselves up to dissipations and excesses out of the very revulsion that takes place in them to such a description of the Almighty, and the freedom and happiness they experience when it is thrown off.

The argument is often used by unbelievers that no one has ever come back from the dead to tell us what is to be hereafter : this is untrue. Our Saviour came back from the dead and told His followers to go into all the world and preach the good news of *the salvation of God hereafter* to every creature ; that the only persons who should not receive it would be those that could not believe in it ; that those who believed it would receive a baptism they little thought of before they died by waiting patiently and quietly for it, and asking for it earnestly, without the aid of any man ; and they would have some of the signs accompanying, as He promised, although they might not be noticed by those they were surrounded by. It is difficult to understand how anyone can preach this good news who does not himself believe in it.

Hitherto the multitude has ever supported the priesthood against those who would have protected them from the consequences of their teaching and their rule, and has sent millions upon millions to join our Saviour at their instance. How long this may continue it is impossible to predict, but the slow though certain progress of the work of the great Creator shows that it is rapidly coming to an end. In England and France, and in many Continental states and nations, the priesthood has had power wholly taken away from them to hurt or to injure the body, other than by inducing men and women voluntarily to immure themselves and by obtaining their

money and their goods. Only in Russia would there appear to remain that control in their hands by which people can be injured in their goods and their persons, or in their liberty, by the priesthood ; and everything denotes their inability to retain it.

Nothing could possibly have done so much injury to mankind. Murderers and thieves and adulterers can only injure temporarily, and the consequences soon pass away ; but this injury appears endless. The prostration of mind and helplessness of a large portion of mankind are extreme ; nor does the law at present notice this and give relief. Large bodies live on and care for nothing but for respect to the cloth, the Church, and the graveyard ; whilst others as large defy everything and, by reasoning, persuade themselves of the untruthfulness of the teaching, and treat everything of the kind with contempt.

God's creation of our Saviour was, like all His works, perfect. Christ's life—His teaching and atonement—was also perfect ; but, as in the order of all the Almighty's work, decay commences as soon as perfection is attained, so has it fared with Christ's teaching. And the present disfigured and decayed condition of Christianity is but in perfect accordance with all His work, who is Incomprehensible, giving assurance that a better work is at hand, and that out of its very ashes will spring forth the fulfilment of the prophecies. Fear of the devil will be destroyed, and faith in God will take its place, and the sick will have hands laid upon them, and the revelation of better things will give light and life to all.

That progress which though slow is yet so sure will proclaim His faithfulness, for all God's works are progressive,

though many may say, "Who will show us any good?" and He will lift up the light of His countenance upon all who seek Him and humbly wait upon Him, to the utter discomfiture of those who have blasphemed Him whilst they have been calling Him, Lord, Lord!

However many may cleave to paganism and idolatry, however many Scribes and Pharisees and converted men there may be teaching the devil and hell fire, Christ will yet be triumphant; and those who have crucified Him over and over again, and those who have in ignorance thought themselves wise above that which is written, will have to stand before Him and hear His judgment upon them.

He called Peter "Satan," notwithstanding that in many things Peter was certainly an angel of light, being a preacher of the Gospel and working miracles. And so St. Paul said of many he saw that they were Satan, teaching erroneously, whilst they appeared, or, as he quaintly puts it, were transformed into, angels of light, as, in some measure, he was himself. How many, many Satans are there now, and have there been since, preaching what they believed to be the Gospel earnestly enough whilst teaching that which was wrong and wholly inconsistent with our Saviour's example and precepts? the more so because there was no Nero and no Roman or pagan power going about to persecute, and by them to be called their adversary the devil, going about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he might destroy.

The persistent use of the term "hell" by educated priests and ministers, with the object of conveying to those to whom they speak that there is a place of torment prepared by the Almighty for sinners after death, is sheer blasphemy,

because they must know that the word has been substituted for "hades," and that the Old English word, of which it is the corruption, signifies to cover up or conceal only.

Its being used by uneducated persons is a very different thing, although in their ignorance they endeavour to magnify the tortures and the fire, and to impress on those to whom they speak that this frightful condition is interminable. As the word "damnation" means sin, and as there are greater or less degrees of sin, there are necessarily greater or less degrees of damnation, and none are without sin in some measure here.

Our Saviour's denunciations, which may give some colour to the use of fiery punishment, was never applied to the multitude, except in the passage "Every one shall be salted with fire," implying a spiritual correction of a vivid and sensible character; but to the Scribes and Pharisees, or the priests and ministers, His language was of the greatest severity, and certainly implies that those of them who came within the scope of the word "*hypocrite*" would be subject to it excessively. This would be but consistent, considering the injury they did and the blasphemy they were guilty of.

Our Saviour's declaration that all sins that may be committed and blasphemies that men may be guilty of shall be forgiven them is now ignored; but it must be evident that only spiritual men can be guilty of the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. There are other utterances of our Lord which apply to those who have never experienced repentance, such as, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish," and, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be

saved ; but he that believeth not shall" continue in sin. But in these everyone must be his own judge. No one can judge another. Many die by unforeseen accidents ; many die suddenly ; and many in all ranks of life and in every degree of intelligence, without any absolute spiritual experience ; whilst the greater number probably are born again on their death-beds.

There can be but little hope for improvement until the word "hell" is erased from the Scriptures and the proper word, "hades," is introduced in its place. This would give more light to the multitude than could well be imagined, otherwise than by considering the darkness that has overspread the priesthood and ministers and vulgar people through its abuse in calling "hades" "hell."

Those who have received repentance because they have asked earnestly for it, and who have been afterwards born again, as well as the priests and ministers of all denominations, will then, perhaps, remember that the Scribes and Pharisees, or priests and ministers, had the testimony as well, and that they became ten times worse than they were before, just as many of the same class do now. He said that they were to receive no forgiveness in consequence of their blasphemies against His Holy Spirit, even in hades, which would be no better than a lake of fire to *them* ; that they who did not strive to follow His example in using that which was given them were to be bound, hand and foot, and cast into outer darkness ; that they who descended into the excesses of the multitude were to have their portion with the unbelievers ; that they who erred, having received or knowing much, would be beaten with many stripes, and those receiving or knowing little with few

stripes ; that those of them who offended the little ones, or those that were very humble that believed in Him, had better have had a millstone tied to their necks, and to have been drowned in the depth of the sea.

That the sermonizing which has done so much injury had better be restrained in some way, there can be little doubt in the minds of the educated and thinking people. Evidently it had been abused in the same way as when the prophets called it wind. A rule had been introduced into the synagogue that any stranger, after prayer and praise, might take the Book and address the congregation. This enabled our Saviour to speak in the synagogues wherever He went, although it brought Him into great danger from the violence of those who were the acknowledged leaders of the people. On one occasion He appears to have escaped only by a miracle ; and He must have had His face marred and scarred frequently in endeavouring to correct the priests and ministers and the so-called converted men—they seem to have been more and more exasperated against Him, and to have prevented His speaking in the synagogues, compelling Him to speak anywhere, and eventually taking away His life.

Our Saviour prayed for those present who had crucified Him, because they did not know what they were doing ; but how far the Scribes and Pharisees, or the priests, and ministers, were included, it is difficult to determine ; for they certainly should have known that curing a man of madness, or healing him of disease, or restoring a man to life must be good and not evil works, and that they could not proceed from an evil being of any kind. But no blindness exceeds the blindness of priests and ministers or very

religious men to truths which would militate against that which they have been taught, when put forward by anyone opposed to their ways or to their superstitions ; and it would have been the observation of this that would have led to their preaching being curtailed in this way.





CHAPTER X.

Faith in Christ will Destroy Christianity—The Belief of Priests and Ministers—Clergy of different Countries Compared—Inflammatory Character of St. Paul's Epistles—Evils produced by Priests and Ministers—Mankind the same in all Ages—No Evil Spirit out of the Body can Create anything—Truth to be Learnt—Addresses of Isaiah and John the Baptist—Revenues of the Church of England—Teaching and Results Questioned.

As our Saviour prephesied of the temple at Jerusalem, that not a stone should remain above another that would not be thrown down, so might it be prophesied now of the teaching of the various so-called Christian Churches ; that they must all be cast down ; and, paradoxical as it may appear, faith in Christ will destroy Christianity. The harmony that there is in all Christian denominations in the great article of belief, "I believe in the devil," will be by it completely broken down and uprooted, giving place to a better tree, which will bring forth better fruit.

When priests and ministers and converted men make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, and believe that when they fail the mammon of unrighteousness may receive them into everlasting habitations.

When priests and ministers and converted men believe that there is an everlasting fire, with which *they* will be salted and corrected, and understand that it is only upon Scribes and Pharisees, or upon His own disciples, both of

whom had received spiritual life, that He denounced fiery correction, if required, excessively.

When priests and ministers desist from threatening fire and torment on sinners, who, if they are not cared for and instructed aright may perish, to their cost hereafter.

When priests and ministers and converted men understand that by condemning the evil, and denouncing sinners openly, they only increase the evil and prevent the good from growing.

When priests and ministers and converted men believe that God sees everything and works wisely in every way for their intelligence and progress, but not as they work, and that He has created both the evil and the good, that without evil there could be no good, and, consequently, that "He judgeth no man."

When priests and ministers and converted men believe in our Saviour's precepts only, and follow His example in all things, especially in His humility and denunciation of spiritual, but not of moral evil.

When priests and ministers remember what the Manichæan heresy was, so earnestly condemned by the early Christian Church.

When priests and ministers shall believe that Moses set forth sufficiently the punishment of evil doing to the Israelites.

When priests and ministers shall believe that it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for the priests and ministers who would not receive His teachers nor hear their words, and that those very priests and ministers who refused to hear them were even more *religious* than any priests and ministers are now.

When priests and ministers know what the wisdom of the serpent consists in, and practise it, and what the harmlessness of the dove is.

When priests and ministers remember that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.

When priests and ministers and converted men understand that every parade of religion and every endeavour by them to make men good only increase hypocrisy and the evil ; and that by confession, by stated fastings, by total abstinence, by long prayers and prayer-meetings, by holy days, and by religious processions souls are injured and much hypocrisy and self-righteousness and false religion spread abroad.

When priests and ministers and so-called converted men understand that being born again and conversion are two very different things.

When priests and ministers and so-called converted men understand that there are differences of inspiration in degree as well as in character.

When priests and ministers and so-called converted men will abstain from sitting at the feet of St. Paul and St. Peter and St. James and St. John, and be content to sit quietly at the feet of Jesus.

When priests and ministers are able to distinguish and to follow the work of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, and to know the work of an evil spirit, and avoid it :

Then may their darkness receive light, and there will be that resurrection of good things prophesied of in the Scriptures, and God will indeed be glorified where He is now blasphemed and condemned, and Christ will reign gloriously over the earth. His dominion will be an everlasting

dominion and His crown one that will never be taken away.

But before priests and ministers and so-called converted men will consider and understand these things, "the stars will fall from heaven, and the heavens will be rolled up as a scroll"; the multitude will desert those who will never understand or believe them, and without this support they will fall. Then will commence the advent of better things than hell fire and torment for ever and the devil, as the author of evil and the antagonist of the Almighty and Incomprehensible Creator of all things, who judgeth no man, but has committed all judgment unto the Son. With the evil in the world, good will ever accompany it: for without evil there can be no good; there can be no intellect; there can be no understanding; there can be no progress.

The immense influence which priests and ministers exercised upon the multitude in our Saviour's time, as well as before and since then, and the terrible evils that it has suffered from them at all times, would account for the fiery correction denounced by Him upon all those who should, by their ways, lead it astray, or use it for their own purposes, or abuse their influence over it, to its injury. All that our Saviour taught is consistent with this. Nor did He spare or exclude His disciples from this correction, or lead them to think that they would be protected by Him from it, if they did not heed His words or did not know His voice, declaring that the correction would be proportionate to those who knew little and to those who knew much.

His sacrifice was to give life to all those who were

perishing who would accept it—not to protect from deserved fiery punishment those who had, by repentance, obtained spiritual life and abused it.

It is difficult to say how far superior the great body of the clergy of one great nation is to the clergy of another, each equally believing in the devil and hell fire and torment for ever—the clergy of the empire of Russia, as compared with the clergy of the empire of England, for instance. But it may be presumed that the difference is not very great, inasmuch as some years since, after a visit of the Patriarch of the Greek Church to England, there was an earnest desire for union expressed by the clergy of the Church of England with the clergy of Russia, their faith and their religion apparently being so much in unison with each other; and, no doubt, in the ordinary course of things, their intelligence, their honesty, and their morals otherwise would bear contrast with each other without much loss to either. Nor, as every man's intellect or intelligence depends on his having evil as well as good in his nature, would it be possible otherwise than on very broad grounds to arrive at any conclusion, for individual cases would give no light to be guided by, differing from one another, as men always must do in this world, for the great end contemplated by Him who has created everyone a compound in varying proportions of good and evil, viz., the growth of their intellect and intelligence. But the great tree of life, the common law, still protects an Englishman from the priest, by whom he might in Russia be sent to Siberia or the block.

Christ was really crucified by Scribes and Pharisees and good men, not so much for declaring Himself to be God's own Son as because, whilst cleaving to the good and whilst

denouncing Scribes and Pharisees and prayer-meetings and paganism and all pretenders to goodness, He loved and taught sinners truthfully; and by earnest, secret prayer and *true* self-denial He had power to heal and to bear testimony to His truthfulness by miracles.

How would the proud and the fierce man be humbled, and the vain man be brought low, if he understood that pride and vanity and fierceness and the stiff-neck can only be supported by sin and hypocrisy and evil conduct! How would the total abstainer be regarded if it were believed that open displays of goodness only increase hypocrisy and sin and evil!

One of the most highly-esteemed men in a large Christian, or so-called Christian, community, a good templar, declared openly that the strongest argument against the divinity of our Saviour was that He did not condemn the use of wine and spirituous liquors!

It is impossible to follow St. Paul's teaching and our Saviour's as well, for St. Paul urges that, for condemning which our Saviour was crucified. Nothing that our Saviour has taught, either by example or precept, could have developed into long prayers or prayer-meetings, or into rich vestments and long garments, or into good templarism, or into living sacrifices from abstinence and fasting, or into confession of sins to priests, or into the idolatry of reverencing images or pictures, or into any of the religious excesses now so prevalent. All this has proceeded from the inflammatory character of much of St. Paul's epistles and the extreme views that he has given birth to of so many kinds. These high-toned writings, having buried the simplicity and humility of our Saviour's words under them,

and the frequency with which texts from his epistles are preached from, as compared to the few texts taken from our Saviour's words, are proof of the excessive regard he is held in as a teacher, as compared to our Saviour, whose words are comparatively but little regarded.

How carefully would everyone walk if he understood that the correction of sinners must be left to the law and its officers, and that, if not drawn to repentance, sinners may perish! How would the righteous and very good priests and ministers and so-called converted men act if they understood what their great righteousness and very great goodness were worth, and that all they know in any way of good has first had its beginning in evil; that there liveth not a man that doeth good and sinneth not, and that, walking as they do, they are but the greater sinners! How could men call themselves Christians and dress themselves up in scarlet and fine linen, and lift up wood now, and allow the day of the Lord so to overtake them in darkness, and not in light! How would long prayers and prayer-meetings be regarded if it were understood, and Christ's warnings remembered, that open displays of righteousness produce the very worst of evil, and that the publican and the harlot were nearer heaven than they were!

How would people everywhere have regard for one another and go softly, if the evil were respected and all were striving to cleave to Christ!

Where will all the divisions of so called Christianity be when God, as the Creator of good and evil, is worshipped, and the delusion taught of the devil and hell fire and torment for ever is ignored?

What will those good people—priests and ministers and

so-called converted men—do, who claim by societies to be able to “purify and elevate the moral nature,” when they learn that the great Creator of good and evil allows no open resistance by them to His work, and that they only increase hypocrisy and evil thereby ?

The evils that the multitude suffer most from are the untruthful teaching and determination to rule of priests and ministers and so-called converted men of all denominations. The Church of Russia has sent hundreds of thousands to the block and to Siberia, and has produced Nihilism or infidelity ; the Church of Italy has slaughtered millions upon millions, and ruled with something worse than a rod of iron, and has produced infidelity until it overwhelms the land ; and in France and Germany, and in England and over the whole Continent, it is beginning to bear undisputed sway, and the great infidel power prophesied of will yet rule, and the prophecies will be fulfilled : and it will bear better fruit, and there will be less blasphemy and less idolatry and less hypocrisy, and the tree of life will grow and bear abundance of fruit, and God will be worshipped, and Christ will be taught under its protection, and true religion will obtain liberty, and the evening stars will fall, and the Morning Star will rise, without fear of being crucified and slain, or cast out, or persecuted by priests and ministers and so-called converted men, whose great tower of strength has been the devil and hell fire and torment for ever. And solitude, or the wilderness, has indeed been the refuge of His people and their only safety.

The signs of the times are, first, the general acceptance by religious persons of the Manichæan heresy ; viz., that

there is a great Creator of evil and a place of torment for sinners hereafter, as opposed to a great Creator of good and a place for the good. Then proceeding from this is the great spread of infidelity, this heresy of the Pharisees as well as of the pagans being accompanied either by long prayers and prayer-meetings, total abstinence, and great show of righteousness on the one hand, or by an advance of paganism, with its host of idolatries and superstitions on the other, the preachings of both divisions being much of the same character; our Saviour's passion, His agony of mind, and His sufferings generally affording what is thought to be suitable subjects for Lent, and His resurrection and ascension, for Easter; whilst the subtleties of St. Paul will be more generally selected to preach from during the greater part of the remainder of the year than the Proverbs, or any other portions of Scripture: but no one is instructed as to what His charges against the Scribes and Pharisees consisted of, or how far priests and ministers now are identified with them; why they abused Him, and scarred and marred His face, and eventually, through sheer spiritual enmity and animosity, tried Him upon an obsolete law and crucified Him; whilst the wisdom of the serpent, from being misunderstood, produces the very things He denounced, and the gentleness of the dove is ignored or feigned. No thankfulness is ever expressed to almighty God for creating them sinners, and not beasts unable to sin; and so far from refuting Darwinism, or atheism, or good templarism, or any other "ism" opposed to our Saviour and His teaching, what they call infidelity spreads far and wide, and threatens to overwhelm the spurious Christianity that is taught by all denominations.

That this is the outcome of the work of priests and ministers, there can be no question. However, many have been made acquainted with our Saviour's history, and have necessarily benefited by it in some measure—or how many may have received spiritual life by being taught to ask for it? And if their having taught only our Saviour's sermon on the mount, and what His personal example was, is to be the standard by which they will be tried, what will the result be?

When Zechariah's prophecy is fulfilled (xiv.), and God's holy name is one, it would seem to be doubtful as to what purpose the buildings may be put which have been raised—ostensibly to His honour and glory, but where He has been continually blasphemed and denounced as the Creator of evil, and taught to be hated. It may be His will that they shall stand as the synagogues of old did, in respect to the great temple at Jerusalem, with a liturgy of prayer and songs of praise and thanksgiving only, and really be useful in His service. But they will no longer raise any feelings of division in communities, where all will necessarily worship God, the Incomprehensible, and Christ will reign on earth.

Sermonizing and improving the occasion as a profession will be gone, with the knowledge that God has created both good and evil for our benefit. The very good man's love for his fellow creatures will not be valued much if it beg notice; the vilest of men will not then be exalted, nor will the wicked walk on every side. Those who talk so much now will learn to be still, and know that He whom they have been blaspheming is God, the Incomprehensible, whose work they have been ignorantly profess-

ing to do, with a result of the most unquestionable character.

Imagine a man, thought to be very powerful in the pulpit, or in what the prophet of old denounced as wind, preaching or praying to the great Creator of evil that he and all the congregation might be delivered from the power of the devil ; imagine people groaning in unison and adding loud exclamations to be saved from Him ; but imagine, above all other things, that any such people could imagine that they are assisted by God's Holy Spirit, and that such prayers are acceptable and bring blessings upon the community, with the most ample evidence before their eyes that only the common law has controlled the vilest spiritual animosity and hatred and malice in it that have anywhere, or at any time, been recorded, except where the clergy have been above all law, and no law has consequently been respected, either human or divine : and then no horrors that the imagination can conceive have equalled what such holy men have perpetrated upon those they denounced as not being Christians, and even on one another, with the assistance of the poor sheep they have led astray !

Priests and ministers and so-called converted men, or Scribes and Pharisees, are, as they ever have been ; the tree of life, the protecting common law grows and spreads and gives its protection, or the slaughters and tortures and burnings of former years would be exceeded now by those who know not God and will not sit at the feet of Jesus.

His declaration is, that mankind does not change its nature, and that those who say they would not do as their fathers, or those who had gone before them, under the same

circumstances had done, deceive themselves, and only come under worse correction in consequence. But everything may be expected from the growth of the common law : its fruit is, indeed, for the life of the nations ; evil and good must progress together ; and all require to be taught to cleave to the good and to eschew, while respecting, the evil.

The Church has many truths yet to learn. It would be thought intolerable now to address the priests and ministers as Isaiah did (i. 10), or as John the Baptist did (Matt. iii. 7) ; but there are those amongst the priests and ministers still to whom they would not be inappropriate, notwithstanding that they have had hands laid upon them, and that, according to the views of many, they have thereby received the Holy Spirit and are in the apostolic succession. But, in the face of much poverty and much distress, it may be noted that the revenues of the Church of England amount to about ten millions per annum, a great part of which is obtained from the tithes, or tenth part of the produce of the land ; the result of the labours of the most useful portion of the population—not a voluntary, but an arbitrary tax.

It may be assumed that as much more is obtained from the great multitude of the various religious denominations, apart from the National Church.

If the teaching on every side tends to oppress the minds of men with fear, to encourage idolatrous practices and pharisaical ways, to keep them in darkness, or superstition, or spiritual ignorance, to make them too religious or to drive them into what is called infidelity, to destroy the merry heart and the cheerful countenance, and to give them the sad faces that our Saviour counselled against

instead ; if, in fact, the gift of our Saviour and His great sacrifice for us is used to obtain wealth and power, giving every credit to many priests and ministers for their literary attainments and for a sincere desire for the prosperity and progress of the multitude, and excluding the careless, the reprobate, and the immoral—it is a fair question if anything but a ruinous return is obtained from this immense expenditure.

It is this question that will be seriously considered in the future, and upon which a judgment will be given that will affect all priests and ministers ; for to maintain the duty of public worship on the Sabbath day, which is their special province, cannot surely require so heavy a burden as this upon the multitude.

So far as the result of what is ordinarily called Christianity, displayed for ages by the Church of Rome, it may be estimated to some extent by the circumstance that there is no civilized part of the world, perhaps, where the life of its head would not be in less danger, if he were unprotected by an armed force, than in the city of Rome, notwithstanding that the late Pope was, and that the present one is, as desirous of the temporal and spiritual welfare of its people as is the head of any other religious body.

Our Saviour was never in any danger from the people—it was of the priesthood that He had to beware. They were divided in opinion concerning Him : some of them said He was a good Man ; others said, “ Nay, but He deceiveth the people.” Those who condemned Him, however, were in the majority ; nor did those who spoke approvingly of Him make any endeavour to shield Him from the bitter enmity of the others who crucified Him.

Thus will it ever be in this world whilst priests and ministers assume that they are, not only endowed with power from on high, but that they are thereby also entitled to power in this world to coerce, by threats and promises, the minds of those who may by any course be induced or compelled to acknowledge their superiority.



